

Reverendissimus in Christo Pater IOHANNES TILLOTSON Providentia Divina Archiepiscopus CANTUARIENSIS totius Angliæ Primas et Metrapolitanus Serenissimis Principibus Regi GULIELMO et Reginæ MARIÆ á Secretioribus Consilijs.

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THE

WORKS

Of the Moſt Reverend

Dr. John Tillotſon,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of CANTERBURY:

CONTAINING

Fifty Four Sermons and Diſcourſes,

On SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

Together with

The RULE of FAITH.

BEING

ALL that were Publiſhed by his GRACE Himſelf.
And now Collected into *One Volume.*

To which is Added,
An Alphabetical TABLE *of the Principal Matters.*

The Fifth Edition.

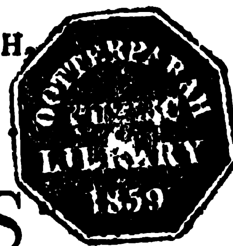
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THE

To the Worshipful

The MASTERS of the BENCH,



And the rest of the

MEMBERS

OF THE

Honourable Society of Lincolns-Inn.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN I resolv'd to publish these Sermons, there could be no dispute to whom I should dedicate them They do of right belong to you, being most of them first preach'd among you; besides my great obligation to you for your constant respects to me, both in the favourable acceptance, and in the generous encouragement of my labours, ever since I had the honour and happiness to be related to you. In a thankful acknowledgment whereof I humbly present this small part of them to you, hoping that by the blessing of God they may be of some use for the promoting of true piety and vertue, which is the sincere wish and aim of

Your most obliged

and faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

A THE

THE

PREFACE.

I *Shall neither trouble the* Reader, *nor my self, with any Apology for the publishing of these* Sermons. *For if they be in any measure truly serviceable to the end for which they are design'd, to establish men in the Principles of Religion, and to recommend to them the practice of it with any considerable advantage, I do not see what Apology is necessary; and if they be not so, I am sure none can be sufficient. However if there need any, the common heads of excuse in these cases are very well known; and I hope I have an equal right to them with other men.*

I shall chuse rather in this Preface, *to give a short account of the following* Discourses, *and as briefly as I can to vindicate a single* passage *in the* first *of them from the Exceptions of a* Gentleman *who hath been pleas'd to honour it so far as to write a whole Book against it.*

The Design of these Discourses *is fourfold.*

First, *To shew the unreasonableness of* Atheism, *and of* scoffing at Religion; *which I am sorry is so necessary to be done in this Age. This I have endeavour'd in the* two first *of these* Discourses.

Secondly, *To recommend Religion to men from the great and manifold* advantages *which it brings both to* publick Society *and to* particular persons. *And this is the argument of the* third *and* fourth.

Thirdly, *To represent the* excellency, *more particularly, of the* Christian Religion; *and to* vindicate the practice of it *from the suspicion of those* grievous troubles and difficulties *which many imagine it to be attended withal. And this is the subject of the* fifth *and* sixth.

Fourthly, *To perswade men to the practice of this holy Religion, from the* great obligation which the profession of Christianity *lays upon men to that purpose; and more particularly, from the glorious rewards of another life; which is the design of the* two last Discourses.

Having given this short account of the following Discourses, *I crave leave of the* Reader *to detain him a little longer, whilst I vindicate a* passage *in the first of these* Sermons, *from the assaults of a whole* Book *purposely writ against it. The* Title *of the* Book *is* Faith vindicated from the possibility of Falshood. *The Author Mr.* J. S. *the famous* Author of Sure-footing. *He hath indeed in this last Book of his, to my great amazement, quitted that glorious* Title. *Not that I dare assume to my self to have put him out of conceit with it, by having convinc'd him of the fantasticalness of it. No, I despair to convince that man of any thing, who after so fair an admonition does still persist to maintain,* * *That* first and self-evident Principles *not only may, but are fit to be demonstrated;*

* Letter of Thanks, p. 24, &c.

† Ibid. p. 11. *monstrated; and* † *that those ridiculous identical Propositions, that* Faith is Faith, *and a* Rule is a Rule, *are* first Principles *in this Controversy of the* Rule of Faith, *without which nothing* can be solidly concluded either about Rule or Faith. *But there was another reason for his quitting of that* Title, *and a prudent one indeed: He hath forsaken the defence of* Sure-footing, *and then it became convenient to lay aside that* Title, *for fear of putting people any more in mind of that Book.*

I expected indeed after his Letter of Thanks, *in which he* * *tells us, he in*tended to throw aside the rubbish of my *Book*, that in his Answer he might the better lay open the Fabrick of my Discourse, and have nothing there to do, but to speak to solid Points; *I say, after this, I expected a full Answer to* the soild Points *(as he is pleased to call them) of my Book; and that, (according to his excellent method of* removing the rubbish, *in order to the pulling down of a building) the* Fabrick *of my Book would long since have been demolish'd and laid even with the ground. But especially, when in the conclusion of that most civil and obliging Letter, he threatn'd* never to leave following on his blow, till he had either brought Dr. *Still.* and me to lay Principles that would bear the test, or it was made evident to all the world that we had none: *I began (as I had reason) to be in a terrible fear of him, and to look upon my self as a dead man. And indeed who can think himself so considerable as not to dread this mighty man of* Demonstration, *this Prince of* Controvertists, *this great Lord and Professor of* First Principles? *But I perceive that great minds are merciful, and do sometimes content themselves to threaten when they could destroy.*

For instead of returning a full Answer to my Book, he (according to their new mode *of confuting Books) manfully falls a nibbling at one single* passage *in it*, pag. 118. *wherein he makes me to say (for I say no such thing) that* the Rule of Christian Faith, and consequently Faith it self, is possible to be false. *Nay in his* Letter of Thanks, * *he says* it is an avow'd Position, *in that place*, that Faith is possible to be false. *And to give the more countenance to this calumny, he chargeth the same* Position (in equivalent terms) of the possible falshood of Faith, and that as to the chiefest and most fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity, *upon the forementioned* Sermon. *But because he knew in his conscience, that I had avow'd no such* Position, *he durst not cite the words either of my* Book *or* Sermon, *lest the Reader should have discover'd the notorious falshood and groundlesness of this Calumny: Nay he durst not so much as refer to any particular place in my Sermon, where such a* passage *might be found. And yet this is the Man that has the face to charge others with false citations, to which charge, before I have done, I shall say something, which (what effect soever it may have upon him) would make any other man sufficiently asham'd.*

But yet I must acknowledge, that in this Position *which he fastens upon me, he honours me with excellent company, my Lord* Faulkland, *Mr.* Chillingworth, *and Dr.* Stillingfleet; *Persons of that admirable strength and clearness in their* Writings, *that Mr. S. when he reflects upon his own style and way of reasoning, may blush to acknowledge that ever he has read them. And as to this* Position *which he charges them withal, I do not know (nor have the least reason upon Mr. S's word to believe) any such thing is maintained by them.*

As for my self, whom I am now only concern'd to vindicate, I shall set down the two Passages, *to which I suppose he refers.*

In my Sermon, *I endeavour (among other things) to shew the unreasonableness of* Atheism *upon this account:* Because it requires more evidence for things

things than they are capable of. *To make this good, I discourse thus: Aristotle* hath long since observed, how unreasonable it is to expect the same kind of Proof for every thing, which we have for some things. Mathematical things being of an abstracted nature, are only capable of clear Demonstration. But Conclusions in Natural Philosophy, are to be prov'd by a sufficient Induction of experiments; things of a Moral nature, by Moral Arguments, and Matters of Fact by credible Testimony. And though none of these be strict Demonstration, yet have we an undoubted assurance of them, when they are prov'd by the best Arguments that the nature and quality of the thing will bear. None can demonstrate to me, that there is such an Island in *America* as *Jamaica*; yet upon the Testimony of credible persons, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as from doubting of the clearest Mathematical Demonstration. So that this is to be entertain'd as a firm Principle, by all those who pretend to be certain of any thing at all, that when any thing is prov'd by as good Arguments as that thing is capable of, and we have as great assurance that it is, as we could possibly have supposing it were, we ought not in reason to make any doubt of the existence of that thing. Now to apply this to the present case. The Being of God is not Mathematically demonstrable, nor can it be expected it should; because only Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be prov'd immediately by sense, because God being suppos'd to be a pure Spirit, cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. But yet we have as great assurance that there is a God, as the nature of the thing to be prov'd is capable of, and as we could in reason expect to have, supposing that he were.

Upon this passage it must be (if any thing in the Sermon) *that Mr. S. chargeth this* Position (in equivalent terms) of the possible falshood of Faith, and that as to the chiefest and most fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity. *And now I appeal to the Reader's Eyes and Judgment, whether the sum of what I have said, be not this, That though the existence of God be not capable of that strict kind of Demonstration which Mathematical matters are, yet, that we have an undoubted assurance of it. One would think that no man could be so ridiculous as from hence to infer, that I believe it possible, notwithstanding this assurance, that there should be no God. For however in many other cases an undoubted assurance that a thing is, may not exclude all suspicion of a possibility of its being otherwise; yet in this* Tenet of a Deity *it most certainly does. Because whoever is assur'd that there is a God, is assur'd there is a Being whose existence is and always was necessary, and consequently is assured that it is impossible he should not be, and involves in it a contradiction. So that my Discourse is so far from being* equivalent *to the* Position *he mentions, that it is a perfect contradiction to it. And he might with as much truth have affirm'd, that I had expresly, and in so many words said that there is no God.*

The other passage is in pag. 118. *of my* Book, *concerning* the Rule of Faith. *I was discoursing that no man can* shew by any necessary argument, that it is naturally impossible that all the Relations concerning *America* should be false. *But* yet (*say I*) I suppose that notwithstanding this, no man in his wits is now possest with so incredible a folly, as to doubt whether there be such a place. The case is the very same as to the certainty of an ancient Book, and of the sense of plain expressions: We have no demonstration for these things, and we expect none; because we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any Book is so ancient as it pretends to be; or that it was written by him whose Name it bears; or that this is the sense of such and such passages in it; it

is

is possible all this may be otherwise: But we are very well assur'd that it is not, nor hath any prudent man any just cause to make the least doubt of it; For a bare possibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no just cause of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is possible all the people in *France* may dye this night, but I hope the possibility of this doth not incline any man in the least to think it will be so. It is possible that the Sun may not rise to morrow morning; yet for all this I suppose that no man hath the least doubt but that it will.

To avoid the cavils of this impertinent Man, I have transcrib'd the whole Page *to which he refers. And now where is this* avow'd Position of the possible falshood of Faith? *All that I say is this, That we are not* infallible *either in judging of the antiquity of a Book, or of the sense of it; by which I mean (as any man of sense and ingenuity would easily perceive I do) that we cannot demonstrate these things so, as to shew that the contrary necessarily involves a contradiction; but yet that we may have a firm assurance concerning these matters, so as not to make the least doubt of them.*

And is this to avow the possible falshood of Faith? *And yet this* Position *Mr. S. charges upon these words; how justly I shall now examine.*

Either by Faith *Mr. S. means the* Doctrine *revealed by God, and then the meaning of the* Position *must be,* that what God says, is possible to be false; *which is so absurd a* Position *as can hardly enter into any man's mind; and yet Mr.* S. *hath the modesty all along in his* Book *to insinuate that in the foreceited* Passage *I say as much as this comes to.*

Or else Mr. S. *means by* Faith, *the* assent *which we give to Doctrines as reveal'd by God; and then his sense of infallibility must be either, that whoever assents to any thing as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd, upon supposition that it is so reveal'd; or else absolutely, that whoever assents to any thing as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd. Now altho' I do not, in the* Passage *foreceited, speak one syllable concerning Doctrines reveal'd by God, yet I affirm (and so will any man else) that an assent to any Doctrine as revealed by God, if it be revealed by him, is impossible to be false. But this is only an infallibility* upon supposition, *which amounts to no more than this,* That if a thing be true, it is impossible to be false. *And yet the principal design of Mr.* S's Book *is to prove this, which I believe no man in the world was ever so senseless as to deny. But if he mean* absolutely, *that whoever assents to any Doctrine as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd, that is, that no man can be mistaken about matters of Faith (as he must mean, if he pretend to have any adversary, and do not fight only with his own shadow,) this I confess is a very comfortable assertion, but I am much afraid it is not true.*

Or else, lastly, By Faith *he understands the* Means *and* Motives *of Faith. And then the plain state of the controversie between us is this,* Whether it be necessary to a Christian belief to be infallibly secur'd of the means whereby the Christian Doctrine is convey'd to us, and of the firmness of the Motives upon which our belief of it is grounded. *This indeed is something to the purpose; for tho' in the* passage *before-cited, I say not one word concerning the Motives of our Belief of the Christian Doctrine, yet my Discourse there was intended to be apply'd to the* means *whereby the knowledge of this Doctrine is convey'd to us. However, I am contented to joyn issue with Mr. S. upon both these Points.*

1. *That it is not necessary to the true nature of* Faith, *that the* Motives *upon which any man believes the Christian Doctrine should be absolutely conclusive, and impossible to be false. That it is necessary, Mr. S. several times affirms in his* Book;

Book; *but how unreasonably, appears from certain and daily experience. Very many Christians* (*such as St.* Austin *speaks of*, as sav'd not by the quickness of their understandings, but the simplicity of their belief) *do believe the Christian Doctrine upon incompetent grounds, and their belief is true, though the argument upon which they ground it be not* (*as Mr.* S. *says*) absolutely conclusive of the thing: *And he that thus believes the Christian Doctrine, if he adhere to it, and live accordingly, shall undoubtedly be sav'd; and yet I hope Mr.* S. *will not say that any man shall be saved without true Faith. I might add, that in this* Assertion *Mr.* S. *is plainly contradicted by those of his own Church.*

For they generally grant, that *General Councils*, though they be infallible in their *Definitions* and *Conclusions*, yet are not always so in their *Arguments* and reasonings about them. And the *Guide* of Controversies* *expressly says*, that it is not necessary that a Divine Faith should always have an external rationally infallible ground or motive thereto (whether Church-Authority, or any other) on his part, that so believes. *Here is a man of their own Church* avowing *this* Position, That Faith is possible to be false. *I desire Mr.* S. *who is the very* Rule *of Controversie, to do justice upon this false* Guide. * P. 3[illegible].

I must acknowledge that Mr. S. *attempts to prove this* Assertion, *and that by a very pleasant and surprizing Argument, which is this.* The profound Mysteries of Faith (*he tells us*†) must needs seem to some, (*viz.* those who have no light but their pure natural Reason, * *as he said before*) impossible to be true; which therefore nothing but a Motive of its own nature seemingly impossible to be false can conquer so as to make them conceit them really true. *What Mr.* S. *here means by a Motive* of its own nature seeming *impossible to be false, I cannot divine, unless he means a* real seeming *impossibility. But be that as it will; does Mr.* S. *in good earnest believe that a* Motive of its own nature seeming impossible to be false, *is sufficient to convince any man, that has and uses* the light of natural Reason, *of the truth of a thing* which must needs seem to him impossible to be true? *In my opinion these two seeming impossibilities are so equally matched, that it must needs be a drawn Battel between them. Suppose the thing to be believed be* Transubstantiation; *this indeed is a very* profound *Mystery, and is* (*to speak in Mr.* S's *phrase*) of its own nature so seemingly impossible, *that I know no* argument *in the world strong enough to cope with it. And I challenge Mr.* S. *to instance in any* Motive of Faith *which is, both to our understanding and our senses, more plainly impossible to be false than their Doctrine of* Transubstantiation *is evidently impossible to be true. And if he cannot; how can he reasonably expect that any man in the World should believe it?* † Faith. vind. p. 9[illegible]. * P. 89.

2. *That it is not necessary to the true nature of* Faith, *that we should be infallibly secur'd of the means whereby the Christian Doctrine is convey'd to us; particularly of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and that the expressions in it cannot possibly bear any other sense. And these are the very things I instance in, in the* passage *so often mention'd. And to these Mr.* S. *ought to have spoken, if he intended to have confuted that* passage. *But he was resolv'd not to speak distinctly, knowing his best play to be in the dark, and that all his safety lay in the confusion and obscurity of his talk.*

Now that to have an infallible security in these particulars *is not necessary to the true nature of Faith, is evident upon these two accounts; because Faith may be without this infallible security, and because in the particulars mention'd it is impossible to be had.*

1. *Because*

1. *Because Faith may be without this infallible security. He that is so assur'd of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and of the sense of those Texts wherein the Doctrines of Christianity are plainly delivered, as to see no just cause to doubt thereof, may really assent to those Doctrines, though he have no infallible security. And an assent so grounded I affirm to have the true nature of Faith. For what degree of* assent, *and what security of the* Means, *which convey to us the knowledge of Christianity, are necessary to the true nature of Faith, is to be estimated from the end of Faith, which is the salvation of mens souls. And whoever is so assur'd of the* authority *and* sense *of Scripture, as to believe the Doctrine of it, and to live accordingly, shall be sav'd. And surely such a belief as will save a man hath the true nature of Faith, though it be not infallible. And if God have sufficiently provided for the salvation of men of all capacities, it is no such reflection upon* the goodness and wisdom of Providence, *as Mr. S. imagines, that he hath not taken care that every man's Faith should arrive to the degree of infallibility; nor does our Blessed Saviour, for not having made this provision, deserve* to be esteem'd by all the world not a wise Lawgiver, but a mere Ignoramus and Impostor, *as * one of his* fellow Controvertists *speaks with reverence.*

* Labyrinthus Cantuariensis, p. 77.

Besides, this assertion that infallibility is necessary to the true nature of that assent which we call Faith, *is plainly false upon another account also; because Faith admits of degrees. But Infallibility has none. The Scripture speaks of a weak and a strong Faith, and of the increase of Faith; but I never heard of a weak and strong Infallibility. Infallibility is the highest perfection of the knowing faculty, and consequently the firmest degree of assent upon the firmest grounds, and which are known to be so. But will Mr. S. say, that the highest degree of assent admits of degrees, and is capable of increase? Infallibility is an absolute impossibility of being deceived; now I desire Mr. S. to shew me the degrees of absolute impossibility; and if he could do that, and consequently there might be degrees of Infallibility, yet I cannot believe that Mr. S. would think fit to call any degree of Infallibility a* weak Faith *or assent.*

2. *Because an infallible security in the particulars mention'd, is impossible to be had; I mean in an ordinary way, and without miracle and particular revelation; because the nature of the thing is incapable of it. The utmost security we have of the antiquity of any Book is human Testimony, and all human Testimony is fallible for this plain reason, because all men are fallible. And though Mr. S. in defence of his beloved Tradition is pleased to say that human Testimony in some cases is infallible, yet I think no man before him was ever so hardy as to maintain that the Testimony of fallible men is infallible. I grant it to be in many cases certain; that is, such as a considerate man may prudently rely and proceed upon, and hath no just cause to doubt of; and such as none but an obstinate man or a fool can deny. And that thus the learned men of his own Church define* certainty, *Mr. S. (if he would but vouchsafe to read such Books) might have learnt from** Melchior Canus, *who speaking of the firmness of human Testimony in some cases, (which yet he did not believe to be infallible) defines it thus,* Those things are certain among men, which cannot be deny'd without obstinacy and folly. *I know Mr. S. is pleased to say, that* certainty *and* infallibility *are all one. And he is the first man that I know of that ever said it. And yet perhaps some body may have been before him in it, for I remember* Tully *says,* That there is nothing so foolish but some Philosopher or other has said it. *I am sure Mr. S's own* Philosopher *Mr.* Wh. *contradicts him in this most clearly, in his* Preface *to* Rushworth's Dialogues; *where explicating the term* Moral certainty, *he tells us, that* some understood by it such

* De lo. Theol. lib. 11. c. 4. Certa apud homines ea sunt, quæ negari sine pervicacia, & stultitia non possunt.

such a certainty as makes the cause always work the same effect, though it take not away the absolute possibility of working other ways; *and this presently after he tells us*, ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors consider'd as mistaken in undervaluing it. *So that according to Mr.* White *true certainty may consist with a possibility of the contrary, and consequently Mr. S. is mistaken in thinking certainty and infallibility to be all one. Nay, I do not find any two of them agreeing among themselves, about the notions of infallibility and certainty. Mr.* Wh. *says, that what some call* moral certainty, *is true certainty, though it do not take away a possibility of the contrary. Mr.* S. *asserts the direct contrary, that Moral certainty is only probability because it does not take away the possibility of the contrary. The* Guide in Controversies * *differs from them both, and makes* moral, certain *and* infallible *all one. I desire that they would agree these matters among themselves before they quarrel with us about them.* * P. 135.

In brief then, though moral certainty *be sometimes taken for a high degree of probability which can only produce a doubtful assent; yet it is also frequently us'd for a firm and undoubted assent to a thing upon such grounds as are fit fully to satisfy a prudent man; and in this sense I have always us'd this* Term. *But now* infallibility *is an absolute security of the understanding from all possibility of mistake in what it believes. And there are but two ways for the understanding to be thus secur'd; either by the perfection of its own nature, or by supernatural assistance. But no humane understanding being absolutely secur'd from possibility of mistake by the perfection of its own nature (which I think all mankind except Mr.* S. *have hitherto granted) it follows, that no man can be infallible in any thing, but by supernatural assistance. Nor did ever the Church of* Rome *pretend to infallibility upon any other account, as every one knows that hath been conversant in the Writings of their Learned men. And Mr.* Cressy *in his * Answer to Dr.* Pierce *hath not the face to contend for any other infallibility but this, that* the immutable God can actually preserve a mutable creature from actual mutation: *But I can by no means agree with him in what immediately follows, concerning the* Omniscience *of a creature; that God,* who is absolutely omniscient, can teach a rational Creature all truths necessary or expedient to be known; so that though a man may have much ignorance, yet he may be in a sort omniscient within a determinate sphere. Omniscient within a determinate sphere; *is an infinite without a finite sphere; and is not that a very pretty sort of knowing all things, which may consist with an ignorance of many things? Of all the* Controvertists *I have met with (except Mr.* S.*) Mr.* Cressy *is the happiest at these smart and ingenious kind of reasonings.* * P. 88, 89.

As to the other Particular *of the sense of Books, it is likewise plainly impossible that any thing should be deliver'd in such clear and certain words as are absolutely incapable of any other sense; and yet notwithstanding this, the meaning of them may be so plain as that any unprejudic'd and reasonable man may certainly understand them. How many* Definitions *and* Axioms, &c. *are there in* Euclid, *in the sense of which men are universally agreed, and think themselves undoubtedly certain of it? and yet the words in which they are express'd, may possibly bear another sense. The same may be said concerning the Doctrines and Precepts of the H. Scriptures; and one great reason why men do not so generally agree in the sense of these as of the other, is because the interests, and lusts and passions of men are more concern'd in the one than the other. But whatever uncertainty there may be in the sense of any Texts of Scripture, Oral Tradition is so far from affording us any help in this case that it is a thousand times more uncertain and less to be trusted to; especially if we may take that to be the Traditionary sense of Texts of Scripture, which we meet with in the* Decretals *of their* Popes, *and the* Acts *of some of their* Councils; *than which never was any*

 thing

thing in the whole world more absurd and ridiculous: And whence may we expect to have the infallible Traditional sense of Scripture, if not from the Heads *and* Representatives *of their Church?*

This may abundantly suffice for the vindication of that Passage *which Mr.* S. *makes such a rude clamor about, as if I had therein deni'd the truth and certainty of all Religion; but durst never trust the Reader with a view of those* words *of mine upon which he pretended to ground this Calumny. But the world understands well enough, that all this was but a shift of Mr.* S's *for the satisfaction of his own Party, and a pitiful Art to avoid the vindication of* Sure-footing, *a Task he had no mind to undertake,*

And yet the main design of this Book *which he calls* Faith vindicated, *&c. is to prove that which I do not believe any man living ever denied,* viz. *That what is true is not possible to be false: Which though it be one of the plainest Truths in the world, yet he proves it so foolishly, as would make any man (if it were not evident of it self) to doubt of it. He proves it from* Logick, *and* Nature, *and* Metaphysicks, *and* Ethicks, *&c. I wonder he did not do it likewise from* Arithmetick, *and* Geometry, the Principles *whereof*, he * *tells us* are concerned in demonstrating the certainty of Oral Tradition. *He might also have proceeded to* Astrology, *and* Palmistry, *and* Chymistry, *and have shewn how each of these lend their assistance to the evidencing of this Truth. For* that *could could not have been more ridiculous, than his* † *Argument from the nature of* Subject *and* Predicate, *and* Copula in Faith-Propositions; *because forsooth whoever affirms any Proposition of Faith to be true, affirms it impossible to be false. Very true. But would any man argue, that what is true is impossible to be false, from the nature of* Subject, Predicate *and* Copula? *for be the Proposition true or false, these are of the same* nature *in both, that is, they are* Subject, Predicate *and* Copula.

* *Sure-footing* p. 93.

† *Faith. vindic.* p. 6, 7, &c.

But that the Reader *may have a taste of his clear style, and way of reasoning, I shall for* his *satisfaction transcribe Mr.* S's *whole Argument from the* nature *of the* Predicate. *His words are these.* Our Argument from the *Copula* is particularly strengthned from the nature of the *Predicate* in the Propositions we speak of; I mean in such speeches as affirm such and such points of Faith to be true. For *True* means *Existent* in Propositions which express only the *An est* of a thing, as most Points of Faith do; which speak abstractedly, and tell not wherein the nature of the subject it speaks of consists, or the *Quid est*. So that most of the Propositions Christians are bound to profess are fully exprest thus, *A Trinity is existent*, &c. and the like may be said of those Points which belong to a Thing or Action past; as, *Creation was*, &c. For, *Existent* is the Predicate in these two, only affixt to another difference of time; and 'tis equally impossible such Subjects should *neither have been* nor *not have been*, or *have been* and *have not been* at once, as it is that a thing should neither *be* nor *not be* at present, or both *be* and *not be* at present. Regarding then stedfastly the nature of our Predicate [*Existent*] we shall find that it expresses the utmost Actuality of a Thing; and as taken in the posture it bears in those Propositions, that actually *exercis'd*, that is, the utmost Actuality in its most actual state; that is, as absolutely excluding all manner or least degree of Potentiality, and consequently all possibility of being otherwise; which is radically destroyed when all Potentiality is taken away. This Discourse holding, which in right to truth I shall not fear to affirm (unconcern'd in the drollery of any Opposer) to be more than Mathematically *demonstrative*, it follows inevitably, that whoso is bound to profess a *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, &c. *is or was existent*, is also bound to profess that 'tis *impossible they should be not Existent*, or

P. 9. 10, 11, 12.

which

which is all one, that 'tis impossible these points of Faith should be false.

The same appears out of the nature of *distinction* or *division* applied to our Prædicate *Existent*, as found in these Propositions: For could that Prædicate bear a pertinent distinction expressing this and the other respect, or *thus* and *thus*, it might possibly *be* according to one of these respects, or thus *considered*, and *not be* according to another, that is *another way considered*: But this evasion is here impossible; for either those distinguishing Notions must be more Potential or Antecedent to the Notion of *Existent*, and then they neither reach *Existent*, nor supervene to it as its Determinations or Actuations, which differences ought to do; nor can any Notion be more *Actual* or *Determinative* in the line of *Substance* or Being, than *Existent* is; and, so fit to distinguish it in that line; nor, lastly, can any determination in the line of Accidents serve the turn; for, those suppose Existence already put, and so the whole Truth of the Proposition entire and complete antecedently to them: 'Tis impossible therefore that what is thus affirmed to be *True*, should in *any regard* be affirmed *possible to be false*: the impossibility of distinguishing the Prædicate pertinently excluding here all possibility of divers respects.

The same is demonstrated from the impossibility of distinguishing the Subjects of those Faith-Propositions; for those Subjects being Propositions themselves; and accepted for *Truths*, as is supposed, they are incapable of Distinction, as shall be particularly shewn hereafter. Besides, those Subjects being Points of Faith, and so standing in the Abstract, that is, not descending to subsuming respects, even in that regard too they are freed from all pertinent distinguishableness.

The same is demonstrated from the nature of *Truth*, which consists in an Indivisible; whence there is nothing of *Truth* had, how great soever the conceived approaches towards it may be, till all *may-not-bees*, or Potentiality to be otherwise, Be utterly excluded by the Actuality of *Is* or Existence; which put or discovered, the light of *Truth* breaks forth, and the dim twilights of *may-not-bees* vanish and disappear.

I have here (Reader) *presented thee with a Discourse which* (*if we may believe Mr. S.*) is more than Mathematically demonstrative. *A rare Sight indeed! And is not this a pleasant Man, and of good assurance? I now find it true, which he* says elsewhere,* That Principles are of an inflexible *genius*, and self-confident too, and that they love naturally to express themselves with an assuredness. *But certainly the sacred* names *of* Principles *and* Demonstration *were never so prophan'd by any Man before. Might not any one write a Book of such* Jargon, *and call it Demonstration? And would it not equally serve to prove or confute? If he intended this* stuff *for the satisfaction of the People, he might as well have writ in the* Coptick *or* Sclavonian *Language: yet I cannot deny, but that it is very suitable to the Principles of the* Roman Church; *for why should not their* Science *as well as their* Service *be in an unknown Tongue? that the one may be as fit to improve their knowledge, as the other is to raise their devotion. But if he design'd this for the Learned, nothing could be more improper; for they are far less apt to admire* nonsense *than the common People: And I desire that no man* (*how learned soever he may think himself*) *would be over-confident, that this is sense. I do verily believe, that neither* Harphius *nor* Rusbrochius, *nor the profound* Mother Juliana, *have any thing in their writings more senseless and obscure than this Discourse of his, which he* affirms to be more than Mathematically Demonstrative. *So that if I were worthy to advise Mr. S. he should give over this pretence to* Science; *for whatever he may think, his Talent certainly does not lye that way; but he seems to be as*

* *Letter of Thanks* p. 1.

well made for a Myſtical Divine, *as any man I know. And methinks his* Superiors *ſhould be ſenſible of this, and employ him to write about the* Deiform fund of the Soul, *the* ſuper-eſſential life, *the* method of Self-annihilation, *and the* paſſive unions of nothing with nothing*: Theſe are profound* Subjects, *and he hath a* Style *peculiarly fitted for them. For even in this* parcel of ſtuff *which I have now cited, there are five or ſix* words, *ſuch as* may-not-bees, potentiality, actuality, actuation, determinative, ſupervene *and* ſubſume, (*which if they were but well mingled and diſcreetly ordered, and brought in now and then with a* that is, *to explain one another*) *would half ſet up a man in that way, and enable him to write as Myſtical a Diſcourſe as a man would wiſh. But enough of this. And I have treſpaſs'd not a little upon mine own diſpoſition in ſaying thus much, though out of a juſt indignation at confident Nonſenſe.*

It is time now to draw towards a concluſion of this debate. I ſhall only leave with the Reader *a few obſervations concerning this* Book *of Mr.* S's, *and his Doctrine of Infallibility.*

Firſt, *That the main drift of his* Book *being to prove that what is true is impoſſible to be falſe, he oppoſes no body that I know of in this matter.*

Secondly, *That in aſſerting Infallibility to be neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, he hath the generality of his own Church his profeſſed Adverſaries. The Church of* Rome *never arrogated to her ſelf any other Infallibility but what ſhe pretends to be founded upon* Chriſt's *promiſe to ſecure his Church always from Error by a* ſupernatural aſſiſtance, *which is widely different from Mr. S.'s rational infallibility of* Oral Tradition. *Mr. S. ſurely cannot be ignorant, that the* Divines *of their Church* (*till Mr.* Ruſhworth *and Mr.* White *found out this new way*) *did generally reſolve Faith into the infallible Teſtimony of the Church, and the infallibility of their Church into our Saviour's Promiſe; and the evidence of the true Church into the* Marks of the Church, *or* the Motives of credibility *which* Motives *are acknowledg'd to be only* prudential, *and not* demonſtrative. * Bellarmin *ſays, that the* Marks *of the Church do not make it* evidently true, *which is the true Church, but only* evidently credible; and that (*ſays he*) is ſaid to be evidently credible which is neither ſeen in it ſelf, nor in its Principles; but yet hath ſo many and ſo weighty Teſtimonies, that every wiſe man hath reaſon to believe it. *Becanus* † *to the ſame purpoſe*, that the Motives of credibility are only the foundation of a prudent, but not of an infallible aſſent. *I know very well that Mr.* Knott *and ſome others would fain perſuade us, that an aſſent* in ſome ſort *infallible, may be built upon* prudential Motives, *which is as abſurd as it's poſſible; but if it were true, yet Mr. S. would not accept of this* ſort of *infallibility; nothing leſs will ſerve him than* demonſtrative Motives, *and ſuch as are* abſolutely concluſive of the thing. Stapleton (*as Mr.* Creſſy *tells us*) *expreſly ſays, that ſuch* an infallible certitude of Means *is not now neceſſary to the* Paſtors *of the Church, as was neceſſary to the* Apoſtles, *who were the firſt founders of the Church. So that, according to theſe* Authors, *there may be true Faith where neither the Means nor the Motives of it are ſuch as to raiſe our aſſent to the degree of infallibility. And this is as much to the full as any* Proteſtant (*that I know of*) *ever ſaid. Nay, even his* Friends *of the* Tradition, *Mr.* Ruſhworth, *Mr.* White, *and Mr.* Creſſy, *are guilty of the ſame* damnable and fundamental Error, *as Mr. S. calls it* *. *For they grant leſs aſſurance than that which is infallible, to be ſufficient to Chriſtian Faith, and that we are juſtly condemn'd if we refuſe to believe upon ſuch evidence as does ordinarily ſatisfy prudent men in human affairs. And particularly, Mr.* Wh. *makes a queſtion whether human nature be capable of infallibility; as I have ſhewn at large by clear and full Teſtimonies*

* L. 4. de Eccleſ.

† Sum. Tom. 2. partic. de fide c. 1.

* *Letter to his Anſwerer*, p. 5.

stimonies out of each of these Authors, *in the* Answer to Sure-footing †. *Of which* Testimonies, *tho' Mr. S. hath not thought fit to take the least notice throughout his* Book; *yet I cannot but think it a reasonable request, to desire him to vindicate the* Divines *of his own Church (especially those of his own way) from these things, before he charge us any farther with them.* † P. 120. &c.

Thirdly, *That Mr. S. by this* Principle, *That infallibility is necessary to the true nature of Faith, makes every true believer infallible in matters of Faith; which is such a* Paradox, *as I doubt whether ever it enter'd into any other man's mind. But if it be true, what need then of any infallibility in* Pope *or* Council? *And if this infallibility be grounded upon the nature of Oral Tradition, what need of supernatural assistance? I doubt Mr.* S. *would be loath to preach this Doctrine at* Rome; *I have often heard, that there is an old testy* Gentleman *lives there, who would take it very ill that any one besides himself should pretend to be infallible.*

Fourthly, That *Mr.* S. *by* his *Principles does plainly exclude from salvation the generality of his own Church, that is, all that do not believe upon* his *Grounds. And this is the necessary consequence of his reasoning in a late* Treatise, *entituled,* The method to arrive at satisfaction in Religion: *The principles whereof are these; That* the Church is a Congregation of Faithful; *The* Faithful *are those* who have true Faith; *That*, till it be known which is the true Faith, it cannot be known which is the true Church; *That* which is the true Faith, can only be known by the true Rule of Faith, *which is* Oral Tradition; *And that the infallibility of* this Rule *is* evident to common sense. *And from these Principles he concludes* * *that* those who follow not this Rule, and so are out of this Church, can have no true Faith; *And that* though many of the Points to which they assent are true, yet their assent is not Faith; for Faith (speaking of Christian Faith) is an assent which cannot possibly be false. *So that the Foundation of this Method is the self-evident infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath been sufficiently consider'd in the* Answer to Sure-footing, *which yet remains unanswer'd. That which I am now concern'd to take notice of, is the consequence of this* Method, *which does at one blow excommunicate and unchristian the far greatest part of his own Church. For if all who do not* follow Oral Tradition *as their only Rule of Faith are out of the Church, and can have no true Faith, then all who follow the* Council of Trent *are* ipso facto *no Christians. For nothing is plainer, than that that* Council *did not make Oral Tradition the sole Rule of their Faith, nor rely upon it as such; which hath been prov'd at large in the* Answer *to* Sure-footing. * Sec. 21.

But why is Mr. S. *so zealous in this matter of infallibility? There is a plain reason for it. He finds that confidence, how weakly soever it be grounded, hath some effect upon the common and ignorant People; who are apt to think there is something more than ordinary in a swaggering man, that talks of nothing but* Principles *and* Demonstration. *And so we see it in some other Professions. There are a sort of People very well known, who find that the most effectual way to cheat the People is always to pretend to* infallible *Cures.*

I have now done with his Infallibility. But I must not forget this Letter of Thanks. *I shall wholly pass by the passion and ill language of it, which a man may plainly see to have proceeded from a gall'd and uneasy mind. He would fain put on some pleasantness, but was not able to conceal his vexation. Nor shall I insist upon his palpable shuffling about the explication of the Terms* Rule *and* Faith. *He was convinc'd that he had explain'd them very untowardly, and therefore would gladly come off by saying that he did not intend* explication, *but only to* prædicate *or* affirm *something of them. And yet the whole design of* P. 7

the

the first page of Sure-footing, *is to shew the necessity of beginning with the* meaning of those words which express the thing under debate: *And this* method *he tells us he will* apply to his present purpose, *and will* examine well *what is* meant *by those* words *which express the thing he was to discuss, namely, The RULE of FAITH. Now if to* examine well what is meant by words, *be not to go about to* explain *them, I must confess my self to be in a great error. Of the same kind is his Apology for his* Testimonies, *as if they*
* P. 105. *were* * not intended against the Protestants; *whereas his* Book *was writ against*
† Sure-footing, p. 126. *the* Protestans; *and when he comes to his* Testimonies, *he* † *declares the design of them to be, to* second by Authority *what he had before establish'd by* Reason. *So that if the* Rational part *of his* Book *was intended against the Protestants, and the* Testimonies *were design'd to second it, I cannot understand why he should say* one *was less intended against them than the* other. *But it seems he is so conscious of the weakness of those Testimonies, that he does not think them fit to satisfy any but those who believe him already.*

As to his charge of false citations, *it is but the common artifice of the* Roman *Controvertists when they have nothing else to say. However, that the world may see how little he is to be trusted, I shall instance in two or three about which he makes the loudest clamour, and leave it to the* Reader *to judge by these, of his sincerity in the rest.*

P. 62. *He says, I notoriously abuse the* Preface *to* Rushworth's Dialogues,*in citing the* Author *of it to say that* such certainty as makes the cause always to work the same effect though it take not away the absolute possibility of working otherwise, ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty; *whereas (says Mr. S.) he only tells us there,* p. 7. that by moral certainty [some understood] such a certainty as makes the cause, &c. *To vindicate my self in this, I shall only set the* Author's *words before the* Reader's *eyes. They are these.* This term *Moral certainty*, every one explicated not alike; but some understood by it such a certainty as makes the cause always work the same effect, though it take not away the absolute possibility of working otherways. Others call'd that a *moral certainty* which proceeds from, &c. A third explication of this word is, &c. Of these three the first ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors consider'd as mistaken in undervaluing it. *Is this only to tell us that by moral certainty* some understood, &c. *Does not the* Prefacer *also expresly affirm, that what these* some understood by moral certainty, ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty? *which is the very thing I cited him for.*

P. 65. *Another heavy charge is, that* according to my usual sincerity, *I quote* Rushworth's *Nephew to say, that a few good words are to be cast in concerning Scripture,* [for the satisfaction of indifferent men who have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture,] whereas (*says Mr.* S.) in the place you cite, he only expresses, it would be a satisfaction to indifferent men to see the positions one would induce them to embrace, maintainable by Scripture. *Does he only say so? let the Reader judge. The words in Mr.* Rushworth *are these:* Yet this I must tell ye, that it were a great satisfaction for indifferent men, that have been brought up in this
P. 76, 77. verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture, to see that the Positions you would induce them unto, can be and are maintain'd by Scripture, and that they are grounded therein. *Certainly one would think that either this man has no eyes or no forehead.*

But the greatest outcry of all is, that I abuse his first Demonstration *by virtue of a direct falsification both of his words and sense, by cogging in the word*

[all,]

[all,] *making his principle run thus, that* the greateſt hopes and fears are applied to the minds of [all] Chriſtians. *This indeed I make to be his* Principle *grounded upon his words which I had cited a little before; and they are theſe,* Firſt, that Chriſtan Doctrine was at firſt unanimouſly ſettled by the Apoſtles in the hearts of the faithful, diſpers'd in great multitudes over ſeveral parts of the world. *2dly.* That this Doctrine was firmly believed by [all] thoſe faithful to be the way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deſerting of it to be the way to damnation; ſo that the greateſt hopes and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine Authority, ſtrongly apply'd to the minds of the firſt Believers, &c. *Now if theſe* firſt believers, *to whom he ſays* theſe hopes and fears were ſtrongly apply'd, *be* all thoſe faithful *he ſpoke of before, which were* diſpers'd over ſeveral parts of the world, (*as the tenor of his words plainly ſhews*) *what are theſe leſs than all the Chriſtians of that Age? And he himſelf a little after tells us, there is the ſame reaſon of the following Ages. So that I made his* Principle run no otherwiſe *than he himſelf had laid it. And if it contradict what he ſays elſewhere, it is no new or ſtrange thing. I wonder more at his confidence in charging ſuch* faſilſications *upon me as every man's eyes will preſently confute him in. Methinks though a man had all* Science, *and all* Principles,*yet it might not be amiſs to have ſome* Conſcience.

I ſhall only ſpeak a few words to the two ſolid Points, *(as I may call them) of his* Letter, *and I have done.*

I had charg'd him that he makes Traditions certainty a firſt *and* ſelf-evident Principle, *and yet that he goes about to demonſtrate it; which I ſaid was impoſſible to be done, and if it could be done was needleſs. To avoid this inconvenience which he found himſelf ſorely preſs'd withal, he diſtinguiſhes between* Speculative *and* Practical *ſelf-evidence, and ſays that things which are* practically *ſelf-evident may be demonſtrated, but thoſe that are* ſpeculatively *ſo, cannot. But he muſt not think to ſhelter himſelf from ſo palpable an abſurdity by this impertinent diſtinction. For let things be* evident *how they will,* ſpeculatively *or* practically, *'tis plain that if they be Principles* evident of themſelves *they need nothing to evidence them; and if they be* firſt *Principles there can be nothing to make them more evident, becauſe there is nothing before them to demonſtrate them by. Now if Mr.* S. *had in truth believed that the certainty of Tradition was a* firſt *and* ſelf-evident Principle, *he ſhould by all means have let it alone, for it was in a very good condition to ſhift for it ſelf; but his blind way of Demonſtration is enough to caſt a miſt about the clearest Truth in the world. But perhaps by the* ſelf-evident *certainty of Tradition, Mr.* S. *only means that it is evident to* himſelf, *for I dare ſay it is ſo to no body elſe. And if that be his meaning, he did well enough to endeavour to demonſtrate it; it was no more than needed.*

The other Point is about his Firſt Principles, *ſuch as theſe,* a Rule is a Rule, Faith is Faith, &c. *which he ſays* † muſt principle all that can be ſolidly concluded either about *Rule* or *Faith. Of theſe he hath mighty ſtore, and bleſſeth himſelf in it, as the* Rich man *in the* Goſpel *did in his full Barns,* Soul take thine eaſe, thou haſt *Principles* laid up for many years; *and out of an exceſs of good nature pities my caſe, who did* undertake to write a Diſcourſe about the Ground of Faith, without ſo much as one principle to bleſs my ſelf with. *But the miſchief is, that after all this ſtir about them they are good for nothing, and of the very ſame ſtamp with that frivolous one* Ariſtotle *ſpeaks of* [if a thing be, it is,] *which he rejects as a vain and ridiculous Propoſition. Such are Mr.* S's *firſt Principles,* ſurfeited of too much truth (*as an ingenious* Writer *of his own Church ſays of them*) *and ready to burſt with ſelf-evidence, and yet by ten thouſand of them a man ſhall not be able to advance one ſtep in knowledge, becauſe they produce no concluſion but themſelves; whereas*

† P. 11.

P. 74.

Analyt. Poſter. l. 7.

it is of the nature of Principles to yield a Conclusion different from themselves. And to convince Mr. S. fully of the foolery of these Principles, I will try what can be done with them, either in a Categorical *or* Hypothetical *Syllogism, e. g.* A Rule is a Rule, Tradition is a Rule, *Ergo* Tradition is a Rule. *Again,* If a Rule be a Rule, than a Rule is a Rule; But a Rule is a Rule, *Ergo. How is any man the wiser for all this? But it may be Mr. S. can make better work with them, and manage them more dextrously, so as to* principle *any thing that can* be solidly concluded *in any Controversy.*

And now I hope at last to have given Mr. S. full satisfaction; since he has brought me to the very point he desir'd, to acknowledge that I have no Principles. *And indeed if there be no other to be had but such as these, I do declare to all the world, that I neither have any* Principles, *nor will have any.*

SERMON

A
TABLE
OF THE
TEXTS to each SERMON.

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SER-

A Table of the Texts.

SERMON I.

The Wiſdom of being Religious.

JOB XXVIII. 28.

And unto man he ſaid, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.



IN this Chapter *Job* diſcourſeth of the ſecrets of nature, and the unſearchable perfections of the works of *God*. And the reſult of his diſcourſe is this. That a perfect knowledge of Nature is no where to be found but in the Author of it; no leſs wiſdom and underſtanding than that which made the World and contrived this vaſt and regular frame of Nature can throughly underſtand the Philoſophy of it and comprehend ſo vaſt a deſign: But yet there is a *knowledge* which is very proper to man and lies level to humane underſtanding; and that is the *knowledge* of our Creator and of the duty we owe to him; the *wiſdom* of pleaſing God, by doing what he commands and avoiding what he forbids: This *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom* may be attained by man, and is ſufficient to make him happy. *And unto man he ſaid, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.*

Theſe words conſiſt of two Propoſitions, which are not diſtinct in ſenſe, but one and the ſame thing variouſly expreſs'd; For *wiſdom* and *underſtanding* are *ſynonymous* words here; and though ſometimes they have different notions, yet in the *Poetical Books of Scripture* they are moſt frequently uſed as words equivalent, and do both of them indifferently ſignify either a *ſpeculative knowledge* of things, or a *practical skill* about them, according to the exigency of the matter or thing ſpoken of. And ſo likewiſe *the fear of the Lord*, and *departure from evil*, are *phraſes* of a very near ſenſe, and like importance; and therefore we find them ſeveral times put together in Scripture: *Fear the Lord*, and *depart from evil*: *By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* So that they differ only as *cauſe* and *effect*, which by a *Metonymy* uſual in all ſorts of Authors, are frequently put one for another. Prov. 3. 7. Pro. 16. 6.

Now, *to fear the Lord*, and to *depart from evil*, are phraſes which the Scripture uſeth in a very great latitude, to expreſs to us *the ſum of Religion, and the whole of our duty.* And becauſe the large uſage of theſe

 phraſes

phrases is to be the foundation of my following discourse, I shall for the farther clearing of this matter endeavour to shew these two things:

1. That 'tis very usual in the Language of Scripture to express the *whole of Religion* by these and such like phrases.

2. The particular fitness of these two phrases to describe Religion.

I. It is very usual in the Language of Scripture to express the *whole of Religion* by some eminent principle or part of Religion.

The great Principles of Religion are *knowledge, faith, remembrance, love, and fear*; by all which the Scripture useth to express the *whole duty* of man.

In the *Old Testament*, by the *knowledge, remembrance* and *fear* of God.
Pro. 30.3. Religion is called *The knowledge of the holy.* And wicked men are descri-
Jer. 10.25. bed to be such as *know not God.* So likewise, by the *fear of the Lord,* frequently in this Book of *Job,* and in the *Psalms* and *Proverbs.* And,
Mal. 3.16. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.* And the *fear of God* is expresly said to be the sum of Religion, *Fear God and keep his*
Eccl. 12. 13. *Commandments, for this is the whole of man:* And on the contrary, the
Psal. 36.1. wicked are described to be such as *have not the fear of God before their eyes.*
Eccl. 12.1. And so likewise by the remembrance of *God, Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; that is, enter upon a religious course betimes:
Psal. 9.17. And on the contrary, the character of the wicked is, that *they forget God; The wicked shall be turned into Hell; and all the Nations that forget God.* In the *New Testament, Religion* is usually expressed by *faith* in *God* and *Christ,* and the *love* of them. Hence it is, that true Christians are so frequently called *believers,* and wicked and ungodly men *unbelievers.*
Ro. 8. 28. And that good men are described to be such as *love God, All things shall*
Eph. 6.24. *work together for good to them that love God*; and *such as love the Lord Jesus Christ.* Now the reason why these are put for the *whole of Religion,* is, because the *belief,* and *knowledge,* and *remembrance,* and *love,* and *fear* of God, are such powerful principles, and have so great an influence upon men to make them Religious, that where any one of these really is, all the rest, together with the true and genuine effects of them, are supposed to be.

And so likewise the sum of all Religion it often expressed by some *eminent part* of it; which will explain the second phrase here in the Text, *departing from evil.* The *worship of God* is an *eminent part of Religion*; and *Prayer,* which is often in Scripture expressed by *seeking God,* and *calling upon his Name,* is a chief part of Religious worship. Hence Reli-
Heb. 11.6. gion is described by *seeking God, He is a rewarder of them that diligently*
Acts 2.21. *seek him:* and by *calling upon his name, Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.* And so by *coming to God,* and by *departing from evil.* In this fallen state of man Religion begins with *repentance* and *conversion,* the two opposite terms of which, are *God* and *Sin:* Hence it is that Religion is described sometimes by *coming to God. He that cometh to*
Heb. 11.6. *God, must believe that he is*; that is, no man can be religious, unless he believe there is a God; sometimes by *departing from sin, And he that de-*
Isa. 59.15. *parteth from evil, maketh himself a prey:* that is, such was the bad state of those times of which the Prophet there complains that no man could be religious but he was in danger of being persecuted.

II. For the fitness of these two phrases to describe Religion.

1. For the first, [*the fear of the Lord*] The fitness of this phrase will

appear, if we conſider how great an influence the fear of God hath upon men to make them religious. Fear is a paſſion that is moſt deeply rooted in our natures, and flows immediately from that Principle of ſelf-preſervation which God hath planted in every man. Every one deſires his own preſervation and happineſs, and therefore hath a natural dread and horror of every thing that can deſtroy his Being, or endanger his happineſs. And the greateſt *danger* is from the greateſt *power*, and that is *Omnipotency.* So that *the fear of God* is an inward acknowledgment of a holy and juſt Being, which is armed with an almighty and irreſiſtible power; God having hid in every Man's Conſcience a ſecret awe and dread of his infinite power, and eternal juſtice. Now *fear* being ſo intimate to our natures, it is the ſtrongeſt bond of Laws, and the great ſecurity of our duty.

There are two bridles or reſtraints which God hath put upon humane nature, *ſhame* and *fear.* *Shame* is the weaker, and hath place only in thoſe in whom there are ſome remainders of virtue. *Fear* is the ſtronger, and works upon all who love themſelves and deſire their own preſervation. Therefore in this degenerate ſtate of mankind, *fear* is that paſſion which hath the greateſt power over us, and by which God and his Laws take the ſureſt hold of us: Our *deſire*, and *love*, and *hope*, are not ſo apt to be wrought upon by the repreſentation of virtue, and the promiſes of reward and happineſs, as our *fear* is from the apprehenſions of Divine diſpleaſure. For though we have loſt in a great meaſure the guſt and reliſh of true happineſs, yet we ſtill retain a quick ſenſe of pain and miſery. So that fear relies upon a natural love of our ſelves, and is complicated with a neceſſary deſire of our own preſervation. And therefore Religion uſually makes its firſt entrance into us by this paſſion; hence perhaps it is that *Solomon* more than once *calls the fear of the Lord the beginning of wiſdom.*

2. As for the Second phraſe [*departing from evil*] the fitneſs of it to expreſs the *whole duty of man*, will appear, if we conſider the neceſſary connexion that is between the negative and poſitive part of our duty He that is careful to avoid all ſin will ſincerely endeavour to perform his duty. For the ſoul of man is an active principle, and will be employed one way or other, it will be doing ſomething; if a man abſtain from evil, he will do good. Now there being ſuch a ſtrait connexion betwen theſe, *the whole of our duty* may be expreſſed by either of them; but moſt fitly by *departing from evil*, becauſe that is the firſt part of our duty Religion begins in the forſaking of ſin:

> *Virtus eſt vitium fugere, & ſapientia prima*
> *Stultitia caruiſſe* ——

Virtue begins in the forſaking of vice; and the firſt part of wiſdom is not to be a fool. And therefore the *Scripture*, which mentions theſe parts of our duty, doth conſtantly put *departing from evil* firſt; *Depart from evil* Pſ 34. 14
and do good. Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. Let the wicked forſake his & 37 27
way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord. Iſa 1 16
We are firſt to *put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitful luſts,* 17 & 55 7 Eph 4.
and then *to be renewed in the ſpirit of our Minds, and to put on the new* 23, 24.
man, &c. *Let him eſchew evil and do good.* To all which I may add this 1Pet.3 11
farther conſideration, that the Law of God contained in the ten Com-

mandments, consisting mostly of prohibitions, (*Thou shalt not* do such or such a thing) our observance of it is most fitly expressed by *departing from evil*, which yet includes obedience likewise to the positive Precepts implied in those Prohibitions.

Having thus explain'd the *Words*, I come now to consider the *Proposition* contain'd in them, which is this:

That *Religion is the best knowledge and wisdom.*

This I shall endeavour to make good these three ways.

1. *By a direct proof of it.*

2. *By shewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedness.*

3. *By vindicating Religion from those common imputations which seem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence.*

I begin with the direct proof of this: And because Religion comprehends two things, the *knowledge* of the *Principles* of it, and *a suitable life and practice*; (the first of which being *speculative*, may more properly be called *knowledge*; and the latter, because 'tis *practical*, may be called *wisdom* or *prudence*) therefore I shall endeavour distinctly to prove these two things.

1. *That Religion is the best knowledge.*

2. *That 'tis the truest wisdom.*

1. First. *That it is the best knowledge.*

The knowledge of Religion commends it self to us upon these two accounts.

1. 'Tis the knowledge of those things which are in themselves most excellent.

2. Of those things which are most useful and necessary for us to know.

First, It is the best knowledge, because it is the knowledge of those things which are in themselves most *excellent* and *desirable to be known*; and those are *God* and our *duty*. *God* is the sum and comprehension of all perfection. It is delightful to know the *Creatures*, because there are particular excellencies scatter'd and dispers'd among them, which are some shadows of the Divine Perfections: But in *God* all Perfections in their highest degree and exaltation meet together and are united. How much more delightful then must it needs be to fix our minds upon such an object in which there is nothing but *beauty* and *brightness*, what is *amiable*, and what is *excellent*; what will *ravish our affections and raise our wonder*, *please us* and *astonish* us at once: And that the finite measure and capacity of our understandings is not able to take in and comprehend the infinite perfections of God, this indeed shews the excellency of the object, but doth not altogether take away the delightfulness of the knowledge. For as it is pleasant to the Eye to have an endless prospect, so is it some pleasure to a finite understanding to view unlimited excellencies which have no shore or bounds, tho' it cannot comprehend them. There is a pleasure in admiration; and this is that which properly causeth admiration, when we discover a great deal in an object which we understand to be excellent, and yet we see we know not how much more beyond that, which our understandings cannot fully reach and comprehend.

And as the *knowledge of God* in his *nature* and *perfections* is excellent and desirable, so likewise to know him in those glorious manifestations of himself *in the Works of Creation* and *Providence*; and above all, in that stupendious work of the *Redemption* of the world by *Jesus Christ*, which

was such a mystery, and so excellent a piece of knowledge that *the Angels* are said to *desire to pry into it*. 1 Pet.1.12.

And as the *knowledge of God* is excellent, so likewise of *our Duty*, which is nothing else but *virtue* and *goodness* and *holiness*, which are the image of God, a conformity to the nature and will of God, and an imitation of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections, so far as we are capable: For to know our duty is to know what it is to be like God in *goodness*, and *pity*, and *patience*, and *clemency*, in *pardoning injuries*, *and passing by provocations*; in *justice and righteousness*, in *truth and faithfulness*: and in a hatred and detestation of the contrary of these: In a word, it is to know what is the good and acceptable will of God, what it is that he loves and delights in, and is pleased withal, and would have us to do in order to our perfection and our happiness. It is deservedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledge to know the *laws of the Land*, and the *Customs of the Countrey* we live in, and the *will of the Prince* we live under: How much more, to know the *Statutes of Heaven*, and the *Laws of eternity*, those immutable and eternal rules of justice and righteousness; to know the will and pleasure of the great Monarch and universal King of the World, and the *Customs* of that *Countrey* where we must live for ever? This made *David* to admire the Law of God at that strange rate, and to advance the knowledge of it above all other knowledge, *I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.* Psal. 119. 96.

Secondly, 'Tis the *knowledge* of those things which are most *useful* and *necessary* for us to know. The *goodness* of every thing is measured by its *end* and *use*, and that's the best thing which serves the best end and purpose; and the more necessary any thing is to such an end, the better it is: So that the best knowldge is that which is of greatest use and necessity to us in order to our *great end*, which is *eternal happiness*, and the *salvation of our Souls*. Curious speculations, and the contemplation of things that are impertinent to us, and do not concern us, nor serve to promote our happiness, are but a more specious and ingenious sort of idleness, a more pardonable and creditable kind of Ignorance. That Man that doth not know those things which are of use and necessity for him to know is but an ignorant Man, whatever he may know besides. Now the knowledge of *God*, and of *Christ*, and of our *duty*, is of the greatest usefulness and necessity to us in order to our happiness. It's of absolute necessity that we should know *God* and *Christ*, in order to our being happy; *This is life eternal* (that is, the only way to it) *to know thee the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.* It is necessary John 17. 3 also in order to our happiness to know our *duty*: because 'tis necessary for us to do it, and it is impossible to do it except we know it.

So that whatsoever other knowledge a man may be endued withal, he is but an ignorant person who doth not know God, the Author of his being, the preserver and protector of his life, his Sovereign, and his Judge, the giver of every good and perfect gift, his surest refuge in trouble, his best Friend or worst enemy, the present support of his life, his hopes in death, his future happiness, and his portion for ever: who does not know his relation to God, the duty that he ows him, and the way to please *him* who can make him happy or miserable for ever: who doth not know the Lord Jesus Christ who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

If a man by a vast and imperious mind, *and a heart large as the sand up-*

on the Sea-shore, (as it is said of *Solomon*) could command all the knowledge of *Nature* and *Art*, of *words* and *things*; could attain to a mastery in all Languages, and found the depths of all Arts and Sciences, measure the earth and the heaven, and tell the stars, and declare their ordes and motions; could discouse of the interests of all States, the intrigues of all Courts, the reason of all Civil laws and constitutions, and give an account of the History of all Ages; could speak of trees, *from the Cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the Hyssop that springs out of the wall; and of beasts also and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes*: and yet should in the mean time, be destitute of the knowledge of *God* and *Christ*, and his *duty*; all this would be but an impertinent vanity, and a more glittering kind of Ignorance; and such a man (like the Philosopher, who whilst he was gazing upon the stars, fell into the ditch) would but *sapienter descendere in infernum*, be undone with all this knowledge, and with a great deal of wisdom go down to Hell.

2. Secondly, *That to be religious is the truest wisdom*, and that likewise upon two accounts.

1. Because it is to be wise for our selves.

2. It is to be wise as to our main interest and concernment.

1. *'Tis to be wise for our selves.* There's an expression, *Job* 22. 21. *He that is wise is profitable to himself*; and *Prov.* 9. 12. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self*; intimating that wisdom regards a man's own interest and advantage, and that he is not a wise man that doth not take care of himself and his own concernments, according to that of Old *Ennius*, *nequicquam sapere sapientem, qui sibi ipsi prodesse non quiret*, That man hath but an empty title of Wisdom and is not really wise who is not wise for himself. As *self-preservation* is the first principle of *Nature*, so care of our selves and our own interest is the first part of *wisdom*. He that is wise in the affairs and concernments of other men, but careless and negligent of his own, that man may be said to be busy, but he is not wise: he is employed indeed, but not so as a wise man should be: Now this is the *Wisdom of Religion*, that it directs a man to a care of his own proper interest and concernment.

2. *It is to be wise as to our main interest.* Our chief end and highest interest is happiness: And this is *happiness* to be freed from all (if it may) however from the greatest evils; and to enjoy (if it may be) all good, however the chiefest. *To be happy* is not only to be freed from the *pains* and *diseases* of the *body*, but from *anxiety* and *vexation* of *spirit*: not only to enjoy the *pleasures* of *sense*, but *peace* of *Conscience* and tranquility of *mind*. *To be happy*, is not only to be so for a little while, but as long as may be; and if it be possible, for ever. Now *Religion* designs our *greatest and longest happiness*; it aims at a freedom from the greatest evils, and to bring us to the possession and enjoyment of the greatest good. For Religion wisely considers that men have *immortal spirits*, which as they are *spirits* are capable of a pleasure and happiness distinct from that of our *bodies* and our *senses*; and because they are *immortal*, are capable of an everlasting happiness. Now our *souls* being the best part of our selves, and *eternity* being infinitely the most considerable duration, the greatest *wisdom* is to secure the interest of our *souls* and of *eternity* though it be with loss and to the prejudice of our *temporal* and *inferior* Interests. Therefore *Religion* directs us rather to secure *inward peace* than *outward ease*, to be more careful to avoid *everlasting* and *intolerable torment* than

short

short and *light afflictions which are but for a moment*; to court *the favour* of *God* more than the *friendship* of the *World*, and not so much *to fear them that can kill the body*, *and after that have no more that they can do*, *as him who after he hath kill'd*, *can destroy both body and soul in hell*: In a word, our *main interest* is to be *as happy as we can*, and *as long as is possible*; and if we be cast into such circumstances, that we must be either in part and for a time or else wholly and always miserable, the *best wisdom* is to chuse the *greatest* and *most lasting happiness*, but the *least* and *shortest misery*. Upon this account *Religion* prefers those *pleasures which flow from the presence of God for evermore*, infinitely before the *transitory pleasures* of this world, and is much more careful to avoid *eternal misery* than *present sufferings*. This is the *wisdom of Religion*, that upon consideration of the whole and casting up all things together, *it does advise and lead us to our best interest*.

II. The *Second* way of *confirmation* shall be by endeavouring to shew the ignorance and folly of irreligion. Now all that are irreligious are so upon one of these two accounts: Either, *First*, because they do not believe the foundations and principles of Religion, as *the existence of God*, *the immortality of the Soul*, and *future rewards*: or else, *Secondly*, because though they do in some sort believe these things, yet they live contrary to this their belief; and of this kind are the far greatest part of wicked men. The *first* sort are guilty of that which we call *speculative*, the *other* of *practical Atheism*. I shall endeavour to shew the Ignorance and Folly of both these.

First, *Speculative Atheism* is *unreasonable*, and that upon these *Five* accounts. 1. *Because it gives no tolerable account of the existence of the world*. 2. Nor *does it give any reasonable account of the universal consent of mankind in this apprehension*, That there is a God. 3. *It requires more evidence for things than they are capable of*. 4. *The Atheist pretends to know that which no man can know*. 5. *Atheism contradicts it self*.

I. Because *it gives no tolerable account of the existence of the world*. One of the greatest difficulties that lies in the Atheist's way is, upon his own supposition *that there is no God*, to give a likely account of the existence of the world. We see this vast frame of the World, and an innumerable multitude of creatures in it, all which we who believe a God attribute to *Him* as the Author of them. For a *Being* suppos'd of infinite *goodness* and *wisdom* and *power* is a very likely cause of these things. What more likely to make this vast world, to stretch forth the Heavens and lay the foundation of the Earth, and to form these and all things in them of nothing, than infinite *power*? What more likely to communicate Being and so many degrees of happiness to so many several sorts of creatures, than infinite *goodness*? What more likely to contrive this admirable frame of the Universe and all the creatures in it, each of them so perfect in their kind and all of them so fitted to each other and to the whole, than infinite *counsel* and *wisdom*? This seems to be no unreasonable account.

But let us see now what account the *Atheist* gives of these things. If there be no God there are but these *two* ways imaginable for the world to be. Either it must be said, That not only the Matter but also the *Frame* of this world is eternal; and that as to the main, things always were as they are without any first cause of their being; which is the way of the

Aristotelian

Aristotelian Atheist; (those I mean, who proceed upon *Aristotle*'s supposition of the eternity of the world, but yet deny it to be from God, which he expresly asserts) Or else the *matter* of the world being supposed to be eternal and of it self, the original of this vast and beautiful *frame* must be ascribed meerly to *chance*, and the casual concourse of the parts of matter; which is the way of the *Epicurean* Atheist. But neither of these ways gives a tolerable account of the existence of the world.

1. I shall first consider the *Hypothesis* of those whom for distinction sake I call the *Aristotelian* Atheists, which is this; That not only the *matter* but also the *frame* of the world is eternal, and that as to the main it was always as it is, of it self; and that there hath been from all Eternity a succession of men and other creatures without any first cause of their being.

It seems to be very hard, and if that would do any good might be just matter of complaint, that we are fallen into so prophane and sceptical an age which takes a pleasure and a pride in unravelling almost all the received principles both of Religion and Reason: So that we are put many times to prove those things which can hardly be made plainer than they are of themselves. And such almost are these Principles, *That God is*, and *That all things were made by him*; which by reason of the bold cavils of perverse and unreasonable men we are now-a-days put to defend.

That something is of it self is evident, because we see things are. And the things that we see must either have had some first cause of their being, or have been always and of themselves. One of these two is unavoidable.

So that the controversy between us and this sort of Atheist comes to this; Which is the more credible opinion, that the world was never made nor had a beginning but always was as it is, and that there hath been from all eternity a succession of men and other creatures without any first cause of their being; or, that there was from all eternity such a *being* as we conceive *God* to be, infinite in power, goodness and wisdom, which made us and all other things; The *first* of these opinions I shall shew to be altogether incredible, and the *latter* to have all the credibility and evidence of which a thing of that nature is capable, and such evidence as is sufficient to convince any impartial and considerate man.

Now in comparing the probabilities of things, that we may know on which side the advantage lies, these two considerations are of great moment, What the arguments are on each side, and what the difficulties. For if there be fair proofs on the one side, and none at all on the other, and if the most pressing difficulties be on that side on which there are no proofs: this is sufficient to render *one* opinion very credible and the *other* altogether incredible.

These *two things* therefore I shall endeavour to make good, in the matter that is now under our consideration. *First*, That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other. And *Secondly*, That the side on which there is no proof is incumbred with the greatest difficulties.

First, That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other.

This Question, *Whether the world was created and had a beginning, or not?*

not? is a question concerning *an ancient matter of fact*, which can only be decided these two ways; by *testimony*, and by *probabilities of reason*. *Testimony*, is the principal argument in a matter of this nature, and if fair *probabilities of reason* concur with it this argument hath all the strength it can have: Now both these are clearly on the affirmative side of the question, *viz.* That the world was created, and had a beginning.

1. *Testimony*; of which there be two kinds, *Divine* and *Humane*.

Divine testimony, as such, is not proper to be us'd in this cause considering the occasion of the present debate: For that would be to beg the first and main question now in controversy, which is, Whether there be a God or not? which a testimony from God does suppose, and therefore ought not to be brought for the proof of it. 'Tis true indeed that those effects of Divine Power, I mean miracles which will prove a Divine testimony to an Infidel, will as well prove the being of a God to an Atheist; But when we dispute against those who deny a God no testimony ought to be presum'd to be from God, but must be prov'd to be so. And whatever argument proves that will also prove that there is a God.

Humane testimonies are of two sorts; *universal tradition*, and *written History*. Both these are plainly and beyond dispute on our side.

First, There is an *universal tradition* concerning the beginning of the world, and that it was made by God. And for the evidence of this we have the concurring Tradition of the most *ancient* Nations, the *Egyptians* and *Phenicians**; and of the most *barbarous* the *Indians*; who as *Strabo* † tells us, *did in many things agree with the Grecians*, particularly in this, *that the world did begin, and should have an end; and that God the maker and governor of it, is present in all parts of it.* And *Acosta* tells us, that at the first discovery of *America*, the inhabitants of *Peru* did worship one chief God, under the name or title of *The maker of the Universe*: And yet these People had not had any commerce with the other known parts of the world, for God knows how many ages.

* Vide Grot. de verit. Chr. Relig. *l.* 1.

† Geogr. *l.* 15.

To which may be added, that the most ancient of the Philosophers, and those that were the heads of the chief Sects of Philosophy, as *Thales*, *Anaxagoras* and *Pythagoras* did likewise consent to this Tradition. Particularly concerning *Thales*, *Tully** tells us that he was *the first* of all the Philosophers *that enquired into these things, and he said, that water was the beginning of all things, and that God was that mind* (or intelligent Principle) *which fashion'd all things out of water.* So likewise *Strabo** informs us that the *Brachmans*, the chief Sect of Philosophers among the *Indians*, agreed with the *Grecians* in this, *That the world was made of water.* Which agrees exactly with *Moses*'s account of the Creation, *viz. That the Spirit of God moved upon the face of waters*; which St. *Peter** expresses thus, *That by the word of God the heavens and the earth* (for so the Hebrews call the *world*) *were of old* ἐξ ὕδατος συνεστῶσα *constituted or made of water*; not *standing out of the water*, as our Translation renders it.

* De Nat. Deorum, *l.* 1.

* Geogr. *l.* 15.

* 2 Pet. 3. 5.

Nay *Aristotle** himself, who was the great asserter of the eternity of the world, gives this account why the Gods were anciently represented by the Heathens as swearing by the lake *Styx*, because *water* was supposed to be the *principle of all things*. And this, he tells us, was the *most ancient opinion* concerning the original of the world; and that the *very oldest Writers of Theology*, and those who liv'd *at the greatest distance from his time*, were of this mind. And in the Book *de Mundo* * it is freely

* Metaph. *l.* 1 c. 3.

* Cap. 6.

acknowleg'd to have been an ancient saying, and a general Tradition among all men, *That all things are of God, and were made by him.* I will conclude this with that full Testimony of *Maximus Tyrius* * to this purpose: *However* (says he) *men may differ in other things, yet they all agree in this* Law *or* Principle, *that there is one God, King, and Father of all things,* &c. *This the* Greeks *say, this the* Barbarians; *this those that live upon the Continent, and those that dwell by the Sea; the wise and the unwise.*

* Dissert. I.

Secondly, We have likewise a most *ancient* and credible *History* of the beginning of the world; I mean the History of *Moses,* with which no Book in the world in point of antiquity can contend. I shall not now go about to strengthen my argument, by pleading the Divine authority of this Book; for which yet I could offer good evidence, if that were proper to the matter in hand. It is sufficient to my present purpose that *Moses* have the ordinary credit of an Historian given him, which none in reason can deny him, he being cited by the most ancient of the Heathen Historians, and the antiquity of his writings never questioned by any of them, as *Josephus* * assures us.

* L. 1. contra Appion.

Now this History of *Moses* gives us a particular account of the beginning of the world, and of the creation of it by God. Which assertion of his is agreeable to the most ancient *Writers* among the *Heathen,* whether *Poets* or *Historians.* And several of the main parts of *Moses's* History, as concerning the *Flood* and the *first Fathers* of the *several Nations* of the World (of which he gives a particular account, *Gen.* 10.) do very well accord with the most ancient accounts of *Prophane* History. And I do not know, whether any thing ought more to recommend the Writings of *Moses* to a human belief, than the easy and credible account which he gives of the original of the World, and of the first peopling of it.

As to the account of ancient times, both the *Egyptian* and *Chaldæan* accounts, which are pretended by some to be so vastly different from that of the *Scriptures,* may for all that be, near the matter, easily reconcil'd with it *; if we do but admit what *Diodorus Siculus* and *Plutarch,* very credible persons and diligent searchers into ancient Books, do most expressly assure us, *viz.* that both those *Nations* did anciently reckon months for years. And the account of the *Chineses* is not hard to be reconcil'd with that of the *Septuagint.* Now in so nice and obscure a matter, as the account of ancient times is, it ought to satisfy any fair and reasonable enquirer if they can be brought any whit near one another.

* Vide Dr *Stilling-fleet's Orig. Sac.* where this is fully made out.

So that *universal Tradition* and the most *ancient History* in the world, are clearly on our side. And if they be, one can hardly wish a more convincing argument. For if the world, and consequently mankind had a beginning, there is all the reason in the world to expect these two things: *First,* that there should be an *universal Tradition* concerning this matter; because it was the most memorable thing that could be transmitted to posterity. And this was easy to be done, if mankind sprang from one common *root* and *original,* from whence this *Tradition* would naturally be universally diffus'd. *Secondly,* it may with the same reason be expected, that so remarkable a *thing* should be recorded in the most ancient *History.* Now both these have accordingly happen'd. But then on the other hand, if the world was eternal and had no beginning there could be no real ground for such a *Tradition* or *History.* And if such a Tradition were at any time endeavour'd to be set on foot, it is not easy to imagine how it

should

should at first gain entertainment, but much more difficult to conceive how ever it should come to be *universally* propagated. For upon the *supposition* of those who hold the eternity of the world, the world was always peopled; and if so, there could be no common head or spring from whence such a *Tradition* would naturally derive it self into all parts of the world. So that unless all the world was sometime of one *language*, and under one *Government* (which it never was that we know of since it was peopled) no endeavour and industry could make such a Tradition common.

If it be said, that this Tradition began after some universal deluge, out of which possibly but one family might escape, and that possibly too of barbarous people; from whom any fond and groundless conceit might spring and afterwards spread it self as mankind encreased. This I shall have occasion to consider in a more proper place. In the mean time I have shewn, even from the acknowledgment of *Aristotle* himself, that there was anciently such a Tradition concerning the beginning of the world. Nay, if we may believe him, he himself was the very first asserter of the eternity of the world. For he * says expresly, *That all the Philosophers that were before him, did hold that the world was made.* Thus much for the *first* kind of *proof* this matter is capable of, namely, *testimony.*

* De Cœlo l. 1. c. 10.

2*dly*. The *probabilities of reason* do all likewise favour the beginning of the world: As,

1. The want of any *History* or *Tradition* ancienter than what is consistent with the received opinion of the time of the world's beginning; nay, the most ancient Histories were written long after that time. This *Lucretius*, the famous *Epicurean*, urgeth as a strong presumption that the world had a beginning,

——Si nulla fuit genitalis origo
Terrarum & Cæli, semperque æterna fuere:
Cur supra bellum Thebanum, & funera Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere Poetæ?

i. e. *If the world had no beginning, how is it that the Greek Poets* (the most ancient of their *Writers*) *mention nothing higher than the* Theban *War, and the destruction of* Troy? Were there from all eternity no memorable actions done till about that time? Or had mankind no way till of late to record them and propagate the memory of them to posterity? It is much if men were from eternity, that they should not find out the way of writing all that *long* duration, which had past before that Time. Sure he was a fortunate man indeed, who after men had been eternally so dull as not to find it out, had the luck at last to hit upon it.

But it may be, the famous actions of former times were always recorded, but that the memorials of them have been several times lost by universal deluges, which have now and then happen'd and swept all away, except (it may be) two or three persons, that have escap'd and begun the world again upon a new score. This is the only refuge that the *Atheist* hath to fly to, when he is prest with this and the like arguments. But he cannot possibly escape this way. For these universal inundations must either be *natural* or *supernatural*. If they be *supernatural*, (as any man that considers well the frame of the world, and how hard it is to

give a natural reaſon of them, would be inclin'd to think) then indeed it is eaſy to conceive how a few of mankind, and no more, ſhould eſcape: Becauſe this will depend upon the pleaſure of that ſuperior Being which is ſuppoſed ſupernaturally to order theſe things. But this is to yield what we have all this while contended for, *viz* That there is a God. But if they be *natural*, which the *Atheiſt* muſt ſay, then there is nothing to reſtrain them from a total deſtruction, not only of mankind, but of all the beaſts of the earth. This the *Atheiſt* cannot deny, not only to be very poſſible, but exceeding probable; becauſe he grants it to have come ſo near the matter, that but very few eſcap'd, and no doubt with great difficulty. Now it is the greateſt wonder in the world, that a thing (according to their own ſuppoſition) ſo likely to happen, ſhould never have fallen out in an infinite duration. Will any man have the face to ſay that a thing is likely which did never yet happen from all eternity? One would think that not only whatever is probable, but whatever can poſſibly happen ſhould be brought about in that ſpace: So that if mankind had been from eternity it had in all probability, I had almoſt ſaid, been deſtroyed from all eternity, but I may confidently ſay, long ſince ruin'd.

2. Another *probability* of the world's beginning is, the account which we have of the *original of Learning and the moſt uſeful Arts* in ſeveral parts of the world. Now if the world had been eternal, theſe in all likelihood would have been found out, and generally ſpread long ago and beyond the memory of all ages. There are ſome *Arts* indeed that are peculiarly convenient to ſome particular Nations; and others that are only ſerviceable to the humour and faſhion of one or more ages. Theſe are not likely to ſpread, and they may come in, and go out, and return again as often as there is occaſion. But thoſe which are generally uſeful to mankind in all times and places, if they were once found out (and who would not think they ſhould in an eternal duration?) it is not imaginable but that they ſhould have been ſpread innumerable ages ſince: Nor can any man give a good reaſon how they ſhould ever be loſt, but by ſome ſuch accident as an univerſal deluge, which has been ſpoken to already. But now on the contrary, the beginnings of *Learning* and of the moſt uſeful *Arts* in ſeveral Nations, is very well known. And I add farther, that where-ever Learning and Civil Arts have come, this *Tradition* concerning the *beginning of the world* hath been moſt vigorous, and aſſerted with the greateſt clearneſs and confidence.

3. The ſeveral parts of which the world conſiſts, being (ſo far as by thoſe parts of it which we know, we can poſſibly judge of the reſt) in their nature corruptible; it is more than probable, that in an infinite duration this frame of things would long ſince have been diſſolv'd; eſpecially, if (as the *Atheiſt* affirms) there be no ſuperior being, no wiſe and intelligent principle to repair and regulate it, and to prevent thoſe innumerable diſorders and calamitous accidents, which muſt in ſo long
* L 5. a ſpace in all probability have happen'd to it. This *Lucretius* * alſo urges as a convincing proof that the world was not eternal,

Quare etiam nativa neceſſe eſt confiteare
Hæc eadem; neq; enim mortali corpore quæ ſunt
Ex infinito jam tempore adhuc potuiſſent
Immenſi validas ævi contemnere vires.

It

It must necessarily (says he) *be acknowledg'd that the world had a beginning; otherwise those things which are in their own nature corruptible had never been able, from all eternity to have held out against those forcible and violent assaults which in an infinite duration must have happen'd.* Nay, thus much *Aristotle* himself every where grants, that if the frame of the world be liable to dissolution, it must of necessity be acknowledg'd to have had a beginning.

These are some of the chief Probabilities on our side; which being taken together, and in their united force, have a great deal of conviction in them. Especially if this be added, that there is no kind of *positive proof*, such as pretended on the other side. The utmost that *Aristotle* pretends to prove, is, That the world proceeded from God by the way of a natural and necessary effect, as light does from the Sun. Which if it be true (as there is no tolerable ground for it) the World indeed would be without beginning, but not of it self. And thus I have done with the *first* consideration I propounded to speak to, *viz. That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence or proof on the other.* I proceed therefore to the

Second Consideration, That the most pressing difficulties are on that side on which there is no proof.

Those who deny a God, and hold the world to have been eternal and of it self, have only two things to object against us: The difficulties that there are in the *notion of a God, and in making the world of nothing.* To the *first* I answer: That we attribute nothing to God that hath any repugnancy or contradiction in it. *Power, wisdom, goodness, justice* and *truth*, have no repugnancy in them to our reason; because we own these Perfections to be in some degree in our selves; and therefore they may be in the highest degree that is possible in another. The *eternity* of God and his *immensity*, and his *being of himself*, how difficult soever they may be to be conceived, yet these perfections must be granted to be somewhere; and therefore they may as well, nay much better, be ascrib'd to God, in whom we suppose all other perfections to meet, than to any thing else. And as for God's being a *spirit*, whatever difficulty there may be in conceiving the notion of a *spirit*, yet the *Atheist* must grant the thing, that there is a being or principle really distinct from matter; or else shew how mere matter, which is confessed by themselves to be void of sense and understanding, and to move necessarily, can produce any thing that has sense, understanding and liberty. As to the *other* difficulty, of *making the world of nothing*, I shall only say this: that though it signify an inconceivable excess of power, yet there can no contradiction be shewn in it. And it is every whit as easy to conceive that something should be caus'd to be that was not before, as that any thing should be of it self; which yet must be granted on both sides; and therefore this difficulty ought not to be objected by either.

But then on the other side there are these *two* great and real difficulties. *First*, That men generally have always believed the contrary, *viz.* That the World had a beginning, and was made by God. Which is a strong evidence that this account of the existence of the world is more natural, and of a more easy conception to human understanding. And indeed it is very natural to conceive that every thing which is imperfect (as the world and all the creatures in it must be acknowledged in many respects

to

to be) had some cause which produc'd it, such as it is, and determin'd the bounds and limits of its perfection: but that which is of it self and without a cause, may be any thing, and have any perfection which does not imply a contradiction. *Secondly*. To assert mankind to have been of it self, and without a cause, hath this invincible objection against it; that we plainly see every man to be from another. So that Mankind is asserted to have no cause of its being, and yet every particular man must be acknowledged to have a father; which is every whit as absurd in an infinite succession of men, as in any finite number of generations. It is more easy indeed to conceive how a constant and permanent being, suppose *matter*, should always have been of it self; and then that *that* should be the foundation of infinite successive changes and alterations: But an infinite succession of the generations of men without any permanent foundation is utterly unimaginable. If it be said that the *earth* was always, and in time did produce *men*, and that they ever since have produc'd one another; this is to run into one great absurdity of the *Epicurean* way, which shall be consider'd in its proper place.

And thus I have endeavour'd as plainly and briefly as the nature of the Argument would admit, to prove that the account which the *Scripture* gives of the existence of the world, is most credible, and agreeable to the reason of mankind; and that this *First* account which the *Atheist* gives of it, is altogether incredible. And now I expect after all this the *Atheist* will complain, that all that hath been said does not amount to a *strict demonstration* of the thing. It may be so. And if the Atheist would undertake to *demonstrate* the contrary, there might be some reason for this complaint. In the mean time I desire to know whether when both sides are agreed that the world is, and that it must either have its original from God, or have been always of it self; and if it have been made evident, that on *one side* there are fair *proofs* both from *testimony* and *reason* and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of, and no pretence of proof on the *other*; and that the *difficulties* are most pressing on that *side* which is destitute of proof; I say, if this have been made evident, I desire to know whether this be not upon the matter as satisfactory to a wise man as a *Demonstration*? For in this case there can be no doubt on which side the clear advantage of evidence lies, and consequently which way a prudent man ought to determine assent.

I come now in the *Second* place, to consider the *other account* which another sort of *Atheists*, those whom I call the *Epicureans*, do give of the existence of the world. And 'tis this. They suppose the matter of which the world is constituted to be eternal and of it self, and then an infinite empty space for the infinite little parts of this matter (which they call *Atoms*) to move and play in; and that these being always in motion did after infinite trials and encounters, without any counsel or design and without the disposal and contrivance of any wise and intelligent being, at last by a lucky casualty entangle and settle themselves in this beautiful and regular frame of the world which we now see. And that the Earth, being at first in its full vigor and fruitfulness, did then bring forth men and all other sorts of living creatures as it does plants now.

This is in short the *Epicurean* account of the original of the world, L. 5. which as absurd as it is *Lucretius* * hath very elegantly expressed in these verses.

Sed quibus ille modis conjectus materiai,
Fundarit cælum ac terram, pontique profunda,
Solisque & lunæ cursus, ex ordine ponam.
Nam certe neque consilio primordia rerum
Ordine se quæque, atque sagaci mente locarunt,
Nec quos quæque darent motus pepigere profectò:
Sed quia multa modis multis primordia rerum
Ex infinito jam tempore percita plagis
Ponderibusque suis consuerunt concita ferri,
Omnimodisque coire, atque omnia pertentare,
Quæcunque inter se possent congressa creare:
Propterea fit, uti magnum vulgata per ævum
Omnigenos cœtus, & motus experiundo,
Tandem ea conveniant, quæ ut convenere, repente
Magnarum rerum fiunt exordia sæpe,
Terrai, maris & cœli, generisque animantum.

Thus *he* like a good *Poet*, but a very bad maker and contriver of the World. For I appeal to any man of reason whether any thing can be more unreasonable, than obstinately to impute an effect to chance which carries in the very face of it all the arguments and characters of a wise design, and contrivance? Was ever any considerable work, in which there was required a great variety of parts, and a regular and orderly dispositi-on of those parts, done by chance? Will chance fit means to ends, and that in ten thousand instances, and not fail in any one? How often might a man after he had jumbled a set of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground before they would fall into an exact Poem, yea or so much as make a good discourse in Prose? And may not a little *Book* be as easi-ly made by chance, as this great *Volume* of the World? How long might a man be in sprinkling colours upon Canvas with a careless hand, before they would happen to make the exact Picture of a man? And is a man easier made by chance than his Picture? How long might twenty thou-sand *blind men*, which should be sent out from the several remote parts of *England*, wander up and down before they would all meet upon *Salisbury-plains* and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an Army? And yet this is much more easy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvouz themselves into a world. A man that sees *Henry* the *Seventh*'s Chappel at *Westminster* might with as good reason maintain (yea with much better, considering the vast difference betwixt that little structure and the huge fabrick of the world) that it was never contrived or built by any man, but that the stones did by chance grow into those curious figures into which they seem to have been cut and graven; and that *upon a time* (as tales usually begin) the ma-terials of that building, the stone, morter, timber, iron, lead, and glass, happily met together, and very fortunately rang'd themselves into that delicate order in which we see them now so close compacted that it must be a very great chance that parts them again. What would the world think of a man that should advance such an opinion as this, and write a Book for it? If they would do him right, they ought to look upon him as mad: but yet with a little more reason than any man can have to say that the world was made by chance: or that the first men grew up out of the earth as plants do now. For can any thing be more ridiculous and against

all

all reason, than to ascribe the production of men to the first fruitfulness of the earth, without so much as one instance and experiment in any Age or History to countenance so monstrous a Supposition? The thing is at first sight so gross and palpable, that no Discourse about it can make it more apparent. And yet these shameful *beggars of Principles*, who give this precarious account of the original of things, assume to themselves to be the men of reason, the *great wits* of the world, the only *cautious* and wary persons that hate to be imposed upon, that must have convincing evidence for every thing, and can admit of nothing without a clear demonstration for it.

II. *Speculative atheism* is unreasonable, because it gives no reasonable account of the *universal consent* of mankind in this apprehension, *that there is a God.* That men do generally believe a God, and have done in all Ages, the present experience of the world, and the records of former times do abundantly testify. Now how comes this persuasion to have gained so universal a possession of the mind of man, and to have found such general entertainment in all Nations, even those that are most barbarous? If there be no such thing as God in the world, how comes it to pass that this object doth continually encounter our understandings? Whence is it that we are so perpetually haunted with the apparition of a Deity, and followed with it whereever we go? If it be not natural to the mind of man, but proceeds from some accidental Distemper of our understandings, how comes it to be so universal that no differences of age, or temper, or education can wear it out, and set any considerable number of men free from it? Into what can we resolve this strong inclination of mankind to this error and mistake? How come all Nations to be thus seduced? It is altogether unimaginable but that the reason of so universal a consent in all places and ages of the world, and among all differences of persons, should be one and constant. But no one and constant reason of this can be given, but from the nature of man's mind and understanding which hath this notion of a Deity born with it and stamped upon it; or which is all one, is of such a frame that in the free use and exercise of it self it will find out God: And what more reasonable than to think, that if we be God's workmanship, he should set this mark of himself upon all reasonable creatures, that they may know to whom they belong, and may acknowledge the *Author* of their beings? This seems to be a credible and satisfactory account of so *universal* a *consent* in this matter. But now what doth the *Atheist* resolve this into? He is not at one with himself what account to give of it, nor can it be expected he should. For he that will overlook the true reason of a thing which usually is but one, may easily find many false ones, error being infinite. But there are *three* which he principally relies upon, *fear*, *tradition*, and *policy of State.* I shall briefly consider these.

First, He would make us believe that this apprehension of a God doth spring from an infinite *jealousy* in the mind of man, and an endless fear of the worst that may happen; according to that *divine saying* of the Poet, which he can never sufficiently admire,

Primum in orbe Deos fecit timor,———

Fear first made Gods. So that it is granted on both sides that the *fear* of a *Deity* doth universally possess the minds of men. Now the question is,

whether it be more likely that the existence of a God should be the cause of this fear, or that this fear should be the cause why men imagine there is a God? if there be a God, who hath impressed this image of himself upon the mind of Man, there's great reason why all men should stand in awe of him: But if there be no God, it is not easy to conceive how fear should create an universal confidence and assurance in men that there is one. For, whence should this fear come? It must be either from without, from the suggestion of others who first tell us there is such a *being* and then our fear believes it, or else it must arise from within, from the nature of man which is apt to fancy dreadful and terrible things. If from the suggestion of others who tell us so, the question returns, who told *them* so? and will never be satisfied till the first Author of this report be found out. So that this account of *fear* resolves it self into *tradition*, which shall be spoken to in its proper place. But if it be said that this fear ariseth from within, from the nature of man which is apt to imagine dreadful things, this likewise is liable to inexplicable difficulties. For, *First*, The proper object of fear, is something that is dreadful, that is, something that threatens men with harm or danger; and that in God must either be power or justice; and such an object as this fear indeed may create: But Goodness and Mercy are essential to the notion of a God as well as power and justice: now how should fear put men upon fancying a being that is infinitely good and merciful? No man hath reason to be afraid of such a being, as such. So that the *Atheist* must join another cause to fear, *viz.* hope, to enable men to create this imagination of a God. And what would the product of these two contrary passions be? the imagination of a being which we should fear would do us as much harm as we could hope it would do us good; which would be *quid pro quo*, and which our reason would oblige us to lay aside so soon as we have fancied it, because it would signify just nothing. But, *secondly*, suppose fear alone could do it; how comes the mind of man to be subject to such groundless and unreasonable fears? The *Aristotelian* Atheist will say, it always was so; But this is to affirm, and not to give any account of a thing. The *Epicurean* Atheist, if he will speak consonantly to himself, must say that there happened in the original constitution of the first men such a contexture of *Atoms* as doth naturally dispose men to these panick fears; unless he will say that the first men when they grew out of the earth and afterwards broke loose from their root, finding themselves weak and naked and unarmed, and meeting with several fierce Creatures stronger than themselves, they were put in such a fright as did a little distemper their understandings and let loose their imaginations to endless suspicions and unbounded jealousies, which did at last settle in the conceit of an invisible *being* infinitely powerful, and able to do them harm; and being fully possest with this apprehension (nothing being more ordinary than for crazed persons to believe their own fancies) they became religious; and afterwards when mankind began to be propagated in the way of generation, then Religion obliged them to instil these *Principles* into their Children in their tender years that so they might make the greater impression upon them; and this course having been continued ever since, the notion of a God hath been kept up in the world. This is very suitable to *Epicurus* his *Hypothesis* of the original of men; But if any man think fit to say thus, I cannot think it fit to confute him. *Thirdly*, whether men were from all eternity such timorous and fanciful Creatures, or happened to be made so in the first constitution of things, it seems however that this *fear* of a Deity hath a foundation in nature. And if it be natural, ought we not rather to conclude that there is some ground and reason for these *fears*, and that nature hath not

planted them in us to no purpose, than that they are vain and groundless? There is no principle that *Aristotle* (the great asserter of the eternity of the world) doth more frequently inculcate than this, *That nature doth nothing in vain*; and the *Atheist* himself is forc'd to acknowledge (and so every man must who attentively considers the frame of the world) That altho things were made by chance, yet they have happen'd as well as if the greatest wisdom had the ordering and contriving of them. And surely wisdom would never have planted such a vain principle as the fear of a Deity in the nature of man, if there had not been a God in the World.

Secondly, If *fear* be not a sufficient account of this universal consent, the *Atheist* thinks it may very probably be resolved into *universal Tradition*. But this likewise is liable to great exception. For, whence came this Tradition? It must begin some time, it must have its original from some body; and it were very well worth our knowing who that man was that first raised this spirit which all the reason of mankind could never conjure down since. *Where* did he live, and *when*? In what *Countrey*, in what *Age* of the world? *What was his name, or his sons name, that we may know him*? This the Atheist can give no punctual account of: only he imagines it not improbable that some body long ago (no body knows when) beyond the memory of all Ages did start such a notion in the world and that it hath past for current ever since. But if this *Tradition* be granted so very ancient as to have been before all Books and to be elder than any History, it may for any thing any body can tell have been from the beginning; and then it is much more likely to be a notion which was bred in the mind of man and born with him, than a *Tradition* transmitted from hand to hand through all Generations; especially if we consider how many rude and barbarous Nations there are in the world which consent in the opinion of a God, and yet have scarce any certain *Tradition* of any thing that was done among them but two or three Ages before.

Thirdly, But if neither of these be satisfactory, he hath one way more; which altho it signify little to men of sober and severe Reason, yet it very unhappily hits the jealous and suspicious humour of the generality of men, who from the experience they have had of themselves and others, are very apt to suspect that every body, but especially their *Superiors* and *Governors*, have a design to impose upon them for their own ends. In short, it is this; that this noise about a God is a mere State-Engine and a Politick device, invented at first by some great Prince or Minister of State, to keep People in awe and order. And if so, from hence (saith the Atheist) we may easily apprehend how from such an original it might be generally propagated and become universally current, having the stamp of publick authority upon it. Besides, that people have always been found easy to comply with the inclinations of their *Prince*. And from hence likewise we may see the reason why this notion had continued so long. For being found by experience to be so excellent an instrument of government we may be sure it would always be cherished and kept up.

And now he *triumphs*, and thinks the business is very clear: Thus it was, some time or other, (most probably towards the beginning of the world, if it had a beginning, when all mankind was under one universal Monarch) some great *Nebuchadnezzar* set up this *Image* of a *Deity*, and commanded *all people and Nations to fall down and worship it*: And this being found a successful device to awe people into obedience to government it hath been continued to this day, and is like to last to the end of the World. To this fine Conjecture I have these four things to say:

† 1. That

1. That all this is mere conjecture and supposition; *he* cannot bring the least shadow of proof or evidence for any one tittle of it.

2. This supposition grants the opinion of a God to conduce very much to the support of government and order in the world; and consequently to be very beneficial to mankind. So that the Atheist cannot but acknowledge that it is great pity that it should not be true, and that it is the common interest of mankind, if there were but probable Arguments for it, not to admit of any slight reasons against it; and to punish all those who would seduce men to Atheism, as the great disturbers of the world and pests of humane Society.

3. This supposition can have nothing of certainty in it unless this be true; [illegible] *makes a politick advantage of other mens principles ought to be presumed to contrive those principles into them.* Whereas it is much more common (because more easy,) for men to serve their own ends of those principles or opinion which they do not put into men but find there. So that if the question of a God were to be decided by the probability of this conjecture, (which the Atheist applauds himself most in) it would be concluded in the affirmative; It being much more likely, since Politicians reap the advantages of obedience and a more ready submission to government from mens believing that there is a God, that they found the minds of men prepossessed to their hands with the notion of a God, than that they planted it there.

4. We have as much evidence of the contrary to this supposition as such a thing is capable of, *viz.* that it was not an *arcanum imperii*, a *secret* of *government* to propagate the belief of a God among the people when the Governors themselves knew it to be a cheat. For we find in the Histories of all Ages of which we have any records, (and of other Ages we cannot possibly judge) that Princes have not been more secure from troubles of conscience and the fears of Religion and the terrors of another world, (nay many of them more subject to these) than other men, as I could give many instances, and those no mean ones: What made *Caligula* creep under the bed when it thunder'd? What made *Tiberius*, that great master of the *crafts of government* complain so much of the grievous *stings* and *lashes* he felt in his Conscience? What made *Cardinal Woolsey* (that great *Minister of State* in our own Nation) to pour forth his soul in those sad words, *Had I been as diligent to please my God as I have been to please my King, he would not have forsaken me now in my gray hairs?* What reason for such actions and speeches, if these great men had known that Religion was but a cheat? But if they knew nothing of this secret, I think we may safely conclude that the notion of a God did not come from the Court, that it was not the invention of Politicians and a juggle of State to cozen the people into obedience.

And now from all this that hath been said it seems to be very evident, that the general consent of mankind in this apprehension *that there is a God* must in all reason be ascribed to some more certain and universal cause than *fear* or *tradition* or *State-policy*, *viz.* to *this*, that God himself hath wrought this image of himself upon the mind of man, and so woven it into the very frame of his being that (like *Phidias* his Picture in *Minerva*'s Shield) it can never totally be defaced without the ruin of humane nature.

I know but one *Objection* that this discourse is liable to, which is this; That the universal consent of mankind in the apprehension of a God is no more an Argument that *He* really is, than the general agreement of so many Nations for so many Ages in the worship of many Gods is an Argument that there are many.

To this I answer, 1. That the generality of the *Philosophers* and wise men of all Nations and Ages, did dissent from the multitude in these things.

They believed but one Supreme Deity, which with respect to the various benefits men received from him had several titles bestowed upon him. And altho they did servilely comply with the people in worshipping God, by sensible images and representations, yet it appears by their writings that they despised this way of worship as superstitious and unsuitable to the nature of God. So that *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* are far from being able to pretend to universal consent from their having had the vote of the multitude in most Nations for several Ages together. Because the opinion of the vulgar separated from the consent and approbation of the wise, signifies no more than a great many Cyphers would do without figures.

2. The gross ignorance and mistakes of the *Heathen* about God and his worship are a good argument that there is a God; because they shew that men sunk into the most degenerate condition, into the greatest blindness and darkness imaginable, do yet retain some sense and awe of a Deity; that Religion is a property of our natures and that the notion of a Deity is intimate to our understandings and sticks close to them, seeing men will rather have any God than none; and rather than want a Deity they will worship any thing.

3. That there have been so many false Gods devis'd, is rather an argument that there is a true one than that there is none. There would be no counterfeits but for the sake of something that is real. For tho all pretenders seem to be what they really are not, yet they pretend to be something that really is. For to counterfeit is to put on the likeness and appearance of some real excellency. There would be no Brass money if there were not good and lawful money. *Bristol Stones* would not pretend to be Diamonds, if there never had been any Diamonds. Those *Idols* in *Henry* the seventh's time (as Sir *Francis Bacon* calls them) *Lambert Symnell* and *Perkin Warbeck*, had never been set up if there had not once been a real *Plantagenet* and *Duke* of *York*. So the *Idols* of the Heathen though they be set up in affront to the true God, yet they rather prove that there is *one* than the contrary.

III. *Speculative Atheism* is absurd, because it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *Aristotle* hath long since well observed, how unreasonable it is to expect the same kind of proof and evidence for every thing, which we have for some things. *Mathematical* things, being of an abstracted nature are capable of the clearest and strictest *Demonstration*: But Conclusions in *Natural Philosophy* are capable of proof by an *Induction* of experiments; things of a *moral* nature by *moral* arguments; and *matters of fact* by *credible testimony*. And tho none of these be capable of that strict kind of *demonstration*, which Mathematical matters are; yet have we an undoubted assurance of them, when they are proved by the best arguments that things of that kind will bear. No man can demonstrate to me (unless we will call every argument that is fit to convince a wise man a demonstation) that there is such an *Island* in *America* as *Jamaica*. Yet upon the testimony of credible persons who have seen it, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as I am from doubting of the clearest Mathematical demonstration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm *Principle* by all those who pretend to be certain of any thing at all: *That when any thing in any of these kinds, is proved by as good Arguments as a thing of that kind is capable of, and we have as great assurance that it is as we could possibly have supposing it were, we ought not in reason to make any doubt of the existence of that thing.*

Now to apply this to the present case. The being of a God is not *Mathematically* demonstrable, nor can it be expected it should, because only Mathematical

thematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be proved *immediately* by *sense*, because *God* being supposed to be a pure spirit cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. But yet we have as great assurance that there is a God as the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of; and as we could in reason expect to have, supposing that he were. For let us suppose there were such a *Being* as an *Infinite Spirit*, cloathed with all possible perfection, *that is*, as *good* and *wise* and *powerful*, &c. as can be imagined: what conceivable ways are there whereby we should come to be assured that there is such a *Being*? but either by an internal impression of the notion of a God upon our minds; or else by such external and visible effects as our Reason tells us must be attributed to some cause, and which we cannot without great violence to our understandings attribute to any other cause but such a *Being* as we conceive *God* to be, *that is*, one that is infinitely *good*, and *wise*, and *powerful*? Now we have this double assurance that there is a God; and greater, or other than this the thing is not capable of: If God should assume a body and present himself before our eyes, this might amaze us but could not give us any rational assurance that there is an *Infinite Spirit*. If he should work a Miracle; this could not in reason convince an Atheist more than the arguments he already hath for it. If the Atheist then were to *ask a sign in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath*, what could he desire God to do for his conviction more than he hath already done? Could he desire him to work a greater Miracle than to make a world? Why, if God should carry this *perverse man* out of the limits of this world, and shew him a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, springing out of nothing, he might say that innumerable parts of matter chanc'd just then to rally together and to form themselves into this new world, and that God did not make it. Thus you see that we have all the rational assurance of a God that the thing is capable of, and that *Atheism* is absurd and unreasonable in requiring more.

IV. The *Atheist* is unreasonable, because he pretends to know that which no man can know, and to be certain of that which no body can be certain of; that is, *that there is no God*, and which is consequent upon this (as I shall shew afterwards) *that it is not possible there should be one*. And the Atheist must pretend to know this certainly. For it were the greatest folly in the world for a man to deny and despise a God, if he be not certain that *He* is not. Now whoever pretends to be certain that there is no God hath this great disadvantage, he pretends to be certain of a pure *Negative*. But of *negatives* we have far the least certainty, and they are usually hardest, and many times impossible to be proved. Indeed such *negatives* as only deny some particular mode or manner of a thing's existence, a man may have a certainty of *them*; because when we see things to be, we may see what they are, and in what manner they do or do not exist. *For instance*, we may be certain that man is not a creature that hath wings, because this only concerns the manner of his existence; and we seeing what he is, may certainly know that he is not so, or so. But *pure negatives*, that is, such as absolutely deny the existence of things, or the possibility of their existence, can never be proved. For after all that can be said against a thing this will still be true, that many things possibly are which we know not of, and that many more things may be than are; and if so, after all our arguments against a thing it will be uncertain whether it be or not. And this is universally true, unless the thing denied to be do plainly imply a contradiction; from which I have already shewn the notion of a God to be free. Now the Atheist pretends to be certain of a *pure negative*, that there is no such being as God, and that it is not possible there should be; But no man can reasonably pretend to know thus much, but he

must

muſt pretend to know all things that are or can be; which if any man ſhould be ſo vain as to pretend to, yet it is to be hoped that no body would be ſo weak as to believe him.

V. *Speculative Atheiſm* is unreaſonable, becauſe it contradicts it ſelf. There is this great contradiction in the denial of a God. He that denies a God, ſays that *that* is *impoſſible* which yet he muſt grant to be *poſſible*. He ſays it is *impoſſible* that there ſhould be ſuch a *Being* as God, in ſaying that *de facto* there is no ſuch *being*. For *eternity* being eſſential to the notion of a God, if there be not a God already it is impoſſible now that there ſhould be one; becauſe ſuch a being as is ſuppoſed to be eſſentially eternal and without beginning cannot *now begin to be*. And yet he muſt grant it poſſible that there ſhould be ſuch a *being*, becauſe it is poſſible there ſhould be ſuch a *being* as hath all poſſible perfection: and ſuch a *being* as this is that which we call *God*, and is that very thing which the Atheiſt denies and others affirm to be. For he that denies a God, muſt deny ſuch a being as all the world deſcribe God to be; and this is the general notion which all men have of God, *that he is a being as perfect as is poſſible*; that is, endued with all ſuch perfections as do not imply a contradiction, which none of thoſe perfections which we attribute to God do, as I have already prov'd.

II. *Speculative Atheiſm* as it is *unreaſonable*, ſo is it a moſt *imprudent* and uncomfortable opinion: And that upon theſe *two* accounts. *Firſt*, becauſe it is againſt the preſent intereſt and happineſs of mankind. *Secondly*, becauſe it is infinitely hazardous and unſafe in the iſſue.

1. It is againſt the preſent intereſt and happineſs of mankind. If *Atheiſm* were the general Opinion of the World, it would be infinitely prejudicial to the peace and happineſs of *humane Society*, and would open a wide door to all manner of confuſion and diſorder. But this I ſhall not now inſiſt upon, becauſe I deſign a particular Diſcourſe of *that* by it ſelf.

I ſhall at preſent content my ſelf to ſhew, how uncomfortable an opinion this would be to particular perſons. For nothing can be more evident than that *man* is not ſufficient of himſelf to his own happineſs. He is liable to many evils and miſeries which he can neither prevent nor redreſs. He is full of wants which he cannot ſupply, and compaſs'd about with infirmities which he cannot remove, and obnoxious to dangers which he can never ſufficiently provide againſt. Conſider *man* without the protection and conduct of a *ſuperior Being*, and he is ſecure of nothing that he enjoys in this world, and uncertain of every thing that he hopes for. He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and eagerly to deſire what he is never likely to obtain. *Man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain.* He courts happineſs in a thouſand ſhapes, and the faſter he purſues it the faſter it flies from him. His hopes and expectations are bigger than his enjoyments, and his fears and jealouſies more troubleſome than the evils themſelves which he is ſo much afraid of. He is liable to a great many inconveniences every moment of his life, and is continually inſecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it ſelf. And beſides all this, after all his endeavours to the contrary, he finds himſelf naturally to dread a *ſuperior Being* that can defeat all his deſigns, and diſappoint all his hopes, and make him miſerable beyond all his fears. He has oftentimes ſecret miſgivings concerning another life after this, and fearful apprehenſions of an inviſible Judge; and thereupon he is full of anxiety concerning his condition in another world, and ſometimes plung'd into that anguiſh and deſpair that he grows weary of himſelf. So that the *Atheiſt* deprives himſelf of all the comfort that the apprehenſions of a God can give a man, and yet is liable to all the trouble and diſquiet of thoſe apprehenſions.

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I do not ſay that theſe Inconveniences do happen to all; but every one is in danger of them. For man's nature is evidently ſo contriv'd as does plainly diſcover how unable he is to make himſelf happy. So that he muſt neceſſarily look abroad and ſeek for happineſs ſome where elſe. And if there be no *ſuperior Being*, in whoſe care of him he may repoſe his confidence and quiet his mind; If he have no comfortable expectations of another life to ſuſtain him under the evils and calamities he is liable to in this world, he is certainly *of all creatures the moſt miſerable*. There are none of us but may happen to fall into thoſe circumſtances of danger, or want, or pain, or ſome other ſort of calamity, that we can have no hopes of relief or comfort but from *God alone*: none in all the world to flee to, but *Him*. And what would men do in ſuch a caſe if it were not for *God?* Humane nature is moſt certainly liable to deſperate exigences, and he is not happy that is not provided againſt the worſt that may happen. It is bad to be reduc'd to ſuch a condition as to be deſtitute of all comfort. And yet men are many times brought to that extremity that if it were not for God they would not know what to do with themſelves, or how to enjoy themſelves for one hour, or to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable conſiderations under their preſent anguiſh and ſufferings. All men naturally flye to God in extremity, and the moſt atheiſtical perſon in the world when he is forſaken of all hopes of any other relief is forc'd to acknowledge him and would be glad to have ſuch a friend.

Can it then be a wiſe and reaſonable deſign to endeavour to baniſh the belief of a God out of the world? Not to ſay how impious it is in reſpect of God, nothing can be more malicious to men, and more effectually undermine the only foundation of our happineſs. For if there were no God in the world man would be in a much more wretched and diſconſolate condition, than the creatures below him. For they are only ſenſible of preſent pain, and when it is upon them they bear it as they can. But they are not at all apprehenſive of evils at a diſtance, nor tormented with the fearful proſpect of what may befal them hereafter: nor are they plung'd into deſpair upon the conſideration that the evils they lye under are like to continue, and are incapable of a remedy. And as they have no apprehenſion of theſe things, ſo they need no comfort againſt them. But mankind is liable to all the ſame evils, and many others; which are ſo much the greater, becauſe they are aggravated and ſet on by the reſtleſs workings of our minds, and exaſperated by the ſmart reflections and frettings of our own thoughts: And if there be no God we are wholly without comfort under all theſe, and without any other remedy than what time will give. For if the providence of God be taken away, what ſecurity have we againſt thoſe innumerable dangers and miſchiefs to which humane nature is continually expos'd? What conſolation under them, when we are reduc'd to that condition that no creature can give us any hopes of relief? But if we believe that there is a God that takes care of us, and we be careful to pleaſe him, this cannot but be a mighty comfort to us, both under the preſent ſenſe of affliction, and the apprehenſion of evils at a diſtance. For in that caſe, we are ſecure of one of theſe three things. Either that God by his providence will prevent the evils we fear, if that be beſt for us: Or that he will ſupport us under them when they are preſent, and add to our ſtrength as he increaſeth our burden: Or that he will make them the occaſion of a greater good to us, by turning them either to our advantage in this world, or the increaſe of our happineſs in the next. Now every one of theſe conſiderations has a great deal of comfort in it, for which if there were no God there could be no ground. Nay, on the contrary the moſt real foundation of our unhappineſs would be laid in our Reaſon; and we ſhould

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be so much more miserable than the beasts, by how much we have a quicker apprehension and a deeper consideration of things.

So that if a man had arguments sufficient to persuade him that there is no God (as there is infinite reason to the contrary) yet the belief of a God is so necessary to the comfort and happiness of our lives, that a wise man could not but be heartily troubled to quit so pleasant an error, and to part with a delusion which is apt to yield such unspeakable satisfaction to the mind of man. Did but men consider the true notion of God, he would appear to be so lovely a Being, and so full of goodness and of all desirable perfections, that even those very persons who are of such irregular understandings as not to believe that there is a God, yet could not (if they understood themselves) refrain from wishing with all their hearts that there were one. For is it not really desirable to every man, that there should be such a *Being* in the world as takes care of the frame of it, that it do not run into confusion, and in that disorder ruin mankind? That there should be such a Being, as takes particular care of every one of us, and loves us, and delights to do us good; as understands all our wants, and is able and willing to relieve us in our greatest straits, when nothing else can; to preserve us in our greatest dangers, to assist us against our worst enemies, and to comfort us under our sharpest sufferings, when all other things set themselves against us? Is it not every man's interest, that there should be such a Governor of the world as really designs our happiness, and hath omitted nothing that is necessary to it; as would govern us for our advantage, and will require nothing of us but what is for our good, and yet will infinitely reward us for the doing of that which is best for our selves? that will punish any man that should go about to injure us, or to deal otherwise with us than himself in the like case would be dealt withal by us? In a word, such a one as is ready to be reconcil'd to us when we have offended him, and is so far from taking little advantages against us for every failing, that he is willing to pardon our most wilful miscarriages upon our Repentance and amendment? And we have reason to believe God to be such a Being, if he be at all.

Why then should any man be troubled that there is such a Being as this, or think himself concern'd to shut him out of the world? How could such a Governor as this be wanting in the world, that is so great a comfort and security to mankind and *the confidence of all the ends of the earth*? If God be such a being as I have describ'd, woe to the world if it were without him. This would be a thousand times greater loss to mankind and of more dismal consequence, and if it were true, ought to affect us with more grief and horror than the extinguishing of the Sun.

Let but all things be well consider'd, and I am very confident that if a wise and considerate man were left to himself and his own choice, to wish the greatest good to himself he could devise; after he had search'd heaven and earth, the *sum* of all his wishes would be this, *that there were just such a being as God is*; Nor would he chuse any other benefactor, or friend, or protector for himself, or governor for the whole world, than infinite power conducted and managed by infinite wisdom and goodness and justice, which is the true *notion* of a God.

Nay, so necessary is God to the happiness of mankind, that tho there were no God, yet the Atheist himself upon second thoughts would judge it convenient that the generality of men should believe that there is one. For when the Atheist had attain'd his end, and (if it were a thing possible) had blotted the notion of a God out of the minds of men, mankind would in all probability grow so melancholy and so unruly a thing, that *he himself*

would

would think it fit in policy to contribute his best endeavours to the restoring of men to their former belief. Thus hath God secur'd the belief of *himself* in the world, against all attempts to the contrary; not only by riveting the notion of himself into our natures, but likewise by making the belief of his being necessary to the peace and tranquility of our minds, and to the quiet and happiness of Humane Society.

So that if we consult our reason, we cannot but believe that there is; if our interest, we cannot but heartily wish that there were such a Being as God in the World. Every thing within us and without us gives notice of Him. His name is written upon our hearts; and in every creature there are some prints and footsteps of him. Every moment we feel our dependance upon Him, and do by daily experience find that we can neither be happy without Him, nor think our selves so.

I confess, it is not a wicked man's interest, if he resolve to continue such, that there should be a God; but then it is not mens interest to be wicked. It is for the general good of humane Society, and consequently of particular persons, to be *true* and *just*; it is for mens health to be *temperate*; and so I could instance in all other virtues. But this is the mystery of Atheism, men are wedded to their lusts and resolv'd upon a wicked course; and so it becomes their interest to wish there were no God, and to believe so if they can. Whereas if men were minded to live righteously and soberly and virtuously in the world, *to believe a God* would be no hindrance or prejudice to any such design; but very much for the advancement and furtherance of it. Men that are good and virtuous do easily believe a God; so that it is vehemently to be suspected, that nothing but the strength of mens lusts, and the power of vicious inclinations do sway their minds, and set a *byass* upon their understandings toward Atheism.

2. Atheism is *imprudent*, because *it is unsafe in the issue.* The Atheist contends against the religious man that there is no God; but upon strange inequality and odds, for *he* ventures his eternal interest; whereas the Religious Man ventures only the loss of his lusts, (which it is much better for him to be without) or at the utmost of some temporal convenience; and all this while is inwardly more contented and happy, and usually more healthful, and perhaps meets with more respect and faithfuller Friends, and lives in a more secure and flourishing condition, and more free from the evils and punishments of this world, than the Atheistical person does; however, it is not much that he ventures: And after this life, if there be no God, is as well as he; but if there be a God, is infinitely better, even as much as unspeakable and eternal happiness is better than extreme and endless misery. So that if the Arguments for and against a God were equal, and it were an even question whether there were one or not; yet the hazard and danger is so infinitely unequal, that in point of prudence and interest every man were obliged to incline to the affirmative: And whatever doubts he might have about it, to chuse the safest side of the question, and to make that the principle to live by. For, he that acts wisely and is a throughly prudent man, will be provided against all events, and will take care to secure the main chance whatever happens; but the Atheist, in case things should fall out contrary to his belief and expectation, he hath made no provision for this case. If contrary to his confidence it should prove in the issue that there is a God, the man is lost and undone for ever. If the Atheist when he dies should find that his soul remains after his body, and has only quitted its lodging, how will this man be amazed and blank'd when contrary to his expectation, he shall find himself in a new and strange place, amidst a world of spirits, entred

upon an everlasting and unchangeable state? How sadly will the man be disappointed when he finds all things otherwise than he had stated and determined them in this World? When he comes to appear before that God whom he hath denied, and against whom he hath spoken as despightful things as he could, who can imagine the pale and guilty looks of this man, and how he will shiver and tremble *for the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty*? How will he be surprized with terrors on every side, to find himself thus unexpectedly and irrecoverably plunged into a state of ruin and desperation? And thus things may happen for all this man's confidence now: For our belief or disbelief of a thing does not alter the nature of the thing. We cannot fancy things into being, or make them vanish into nothing by the stubborn confidence of our imaginations. Things are as sullen as we are, and will be what they are whatever we think of them. And if there be a God, a man cannot by an obstinate disbelief of him make him cease to be, any more than a man can put out the Sun by winking.

And thus I have as briefly and clearly as I could, endeavoured to shew the *ignorance* and *folly* of *speculative Atheism* in denying the *existence of God*. And now it will be less needful to speak of the other *two principles* of *Religion*, the *immortality of the Soul*, and *future Rewards*. For no man can have any reasonable scruple about *these*, who believes that there is a God. Because no man that owns the existence of an *infinite spirit* can doubt of the possibility of a *finite spirit*, that is, such a thing as is *immaterial* and does not contain any principle of *corruption* in it self. And there is no man that believes the goodness of God, but must be inclin'd to think that he hath made some things for as long a duration as they are capable of. Nor can any man, that acknowledgeth the *holy* and *just* providence of God, and that he loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and that he is a *Magistrate* and *Governor* of the World, and consequently concerned to countenance the obedience, and to punish the violation of his Laws; and that does withal consider the promiscuous dispensations many times of God's Providence in this world; I say, no man that acknowledges all this, can think it unreasonable to conclude, that after this life good men shall be rewarded, and sinners punished. I have done with the *first* sort of irreligious persons, the *speculative Atheist*. I shall speak but briefly of the other.

Secondly, The *practical Atheist*, who is wicked and irreligious, notwithstanding he does in some sort believe that there is a God, and a future state, he is likewise guilty of prodigious folly. The *principle* of the *speculative Atheist* argues more *ignorance*, but the *practice* of the *other* argues greater *folly*. Not to believe a God, and another life, for which there is so much evidence of Reason is great ignorance and folly; but 'tis the highest madness when a man does believe these things, to live as if he did not believe them: When a Man does not doubt but that there is a God, and that according as he demeans himself towards him he will make him happy or miserable for ever, yet to live so as if he were certain of the contrary, and as no man in reason can live but he that is well assured that there is no God. It was a shrewd saying of the old *Monk*, that two kind of Prisons would serve for all offenders in the world, an *Inquisition* and a *Bedlam*: If any man should deny the being of a God and the immortality of the soul, such a one should be put into the first of these the *Inquisition*, as being a desperate *Heretick*; but if any man should profess to believe these things, and yet allow himself in any known wickedness, such a one should be put into *Bedlam*; because there cannot be a greater folly and madness than for a man in matters of greatest moment and concernment to act against his best reason and understanding,

and by his life to contradict his belief. Such a man does perish with his eyes open, and knowingly undoes himself; he runs upon the greatest dangers which he clearly sees to be before him, and precipitates himself into those evils which he professes to believe to be real and intolerable; and wilfully neglects the obtaining of that unspeakable good and happiness which he is persuaded is certain and attainable. Thus much for the *second* way of Confirmation.

III. The *third* way of confirmation shall be, by endeavouring to vindicate Religion from those common *imputations* which seem to charge it with *ignorance* or *imprudence.* And they are chiefly these three.

1. *Credulity.*
2. *Singularity.*
3. *Making a Foolish Bargain.*

First, *Credulity*: Say they, the foundation of Religion is the belief of those things for which we have no sufficient reason, and consequently of which we can have no good assurance; as the belief of *a God*, and of *a future state* after this life; things which we never saw, nor did experience, nor ever spoke with any body that did. Now it seems to argue too great a forwardness and easiness of belief to assent to any thing upon insufficient grounds.

To this I answer,

1. That if there be such a Being as a God, and such a thing as a future state after this life, it cannot (as I said before) in reason be expected that we should have the evidence of sense for such things: For he that believes a God, believes such a Being as hath all perfections, among which this is one, that he is a spirit; and consequently that he is invisible, and cannot be seen. He likewise that believes another life after this, professeth to believe a state of which in this life we have no trial and experience. Besides, if this were a good objection, that no man ever saw these things, it strikes at the Atheist as well as us. For no man ever saw the World to be from eternity; nor *Epicurus* his *Atoms*, of which notwithstanding he believes the world was made.

2. We have the best evidence for these things which they are capable of at present, supposing they were.

3. Those who deny these *principles*, must be much more credulous, that is, believe things upon incomparably less evidence of reason. The *Atheist* looks upon all that are religious as a company of credulous fools. But *he*, for his part, pretends to be wiser than to believe any thing for company; he cannot entertain things upon those slight grounds which move other men; if you would win his assent to any thing, you must give him a clear demonstration for it. Now there's no way to deal with this *man of reason*, this rigid exactor of strict demonstration for things which are not capable of it, but by shewing him that he is an hundred times more credulous, that he begs more principles, takes more things for granted without offering to prove them, and assents to more strange conclusions upon weaker grounds, than those whom he so much accuseth of credulity.

And to evidence this, I shall briefly give you an account of the Atheist's *Creed*, and present you with a Catalogue of the *fundamental Articles* of his Faith. *He believes* that there is no God, nor possibly can be, and consequently that the wise as well as unwise of all ages have been mistaken, except himself and a few more. *He believes* that either all the world have been frighted with an apparition of their own fancy, or that they have most unnaturally conspired together to cozen themselves; or that this notion of a God is a trick of policy, tho the greatest *Princes* and *Politicians* do not at this day know so much, nor have done time out of min. *He* believes, either that

the Heavens and the Earth and all things in them had no Original cause of their being, or else that they were made by chance and happened he knows not how to be as they are; and that in this last shuffling of matter all things have by great good fortune fallen out as happily and as regularly as if the greatest wisdom had contriv'd them, but yet he is resolv'd to believe that there was no wisdom in the contrivance of them. He believes, that *matter* of it self is utterly void of all *sense*, *understanding* and *liberty*; but for all that he is of opinion that the parts of matter may now and then happen to be so conveniently dispos'd, as to have all these qualities, and most dextrously to perform all those *fine* and *free operations* which the ignorant attribute to Spirits.

This is the sum of his belief. And it is a wonder, that there should be found any person pretending to reason or wit that can assent to such a heap of absurdities, which are so gross and palpable that they may be felt. So that if every man had his due, it will certainly fall to the Atheist's share to be the most credulous person, that is, to believe things upon the slightest reasons. For he does not pretend to prove any thing of all this, only he finds himself, he knows not why, inclin'd to believe so and to laugh at those that do not.

II. The *second imputation* is *singularity*; the affectation whereof is unbecoming a wise man. To this charge I answer,

I. If by *Religion* be meant the *belief* of the *principles* of Religion, that there is *a God*, and *a providence*, that *our souls are immortal*, and that there *are rewards* to be expected after this life; these are so far from being *singular* opinions, that they are and always have been the *general* opinion of mankind, even of the most *barbarous* Nations. Insomuch, that the Histories of ancient times do hardly furnish us with the names of above five or six persons who denied a God. And *Lucretius* acknowledgeth that *Epicurus* was the first who did oppose those great *foundations* of Religion, the *providence* of God, and the *immortality* of the Soul. *Primum Grajus homo*, &c. meaning *Epicurus*.

2. If by Religion be meant a living up to those principles, that is, to act conformably to our best reason and understanding, and to live as it does become those who do believe a God and a future state; this is acknowledged, even by those who live otherwise, to be the part of every wise man; and the contrary to be the very *madness of folly*, and height of distraction: Nothing being more ordinary than for men who live wickedly to acknowledge that they ought to do otherwise.

3. Though according to the common course and practice of the world it be somewhat *singular* for men truly and throughly to live up to the principles of their *Religion*, yet *singularity* in this matter is so far from being a reflection upon any man's prudence that it is a *singular* commendation of it. In two cases *singularity* is very commendable.

1. When there is a necessity of it in order to a man's greatest interest and happiness. I think it to be a reasonable account for any man to give why he does not live as the greatest part of the World do, that he has no mind to dye as they do and to perish with them; he is not disposed to be a fool and to be miserable for company; he has no inclination to have his last end like theirs *who know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son, and shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

2. It is very commendable to be *singular* in any *excellency*, and I have shewn that *Religion* is the greatest *excellency*: to be *singular* in any thing that is wise, and worthy, and excellent, is not a disparagement, but a praise: every man would chuse to be thus *singular*.

III. The *third imputation* is, that *Religion* is a *foolish bargain*; because they who are religious hazard the parting with a present and certain happiness for that which is future and uncertain. To this I answer. 1. Let

1. Let it be granted, that the assurance which we have of future rewards falls short of the evidence of sense. For I doubt not, but that saying of our *Saviour*, *Blessed is he who hath believed, and not seen*; and those expressions of the *Apostle*, *we walk by faith and not by sight*, and *faith is the evidence of things not seen*, are intended by way of abatement and diminution to the evidence of Faith, and do signify that the report and testimony of others is not so great evidence as that of our own senses: And tho' we have sufficient assurance of another state, yet no man can think we have so great evidence as if we our selves had been in the other world, and seen how all things are there.

2. We have sufficient assurance of these things, and such as may beget in us a well-grounded confidence, and frees us from all doubts of the contrary, and persuade a reasonable man to venture his greatest interests in this World upon the security that he hath of another: For,

1. We have as much assurance of these things as things future, and at a distance are capable of, and he is a very unreasonable man that would desire more: Future and invisible things are not capable of the evidence of sense; but we have the greatest rational evidence for them, and in this every reasonable man ought to rest satisfied.

2. We have as much as is abundantly sufficient to justify every man's discretion, who for the great and eternal things of another world, hazards or parts with the poor and transitory things of this life. And for the clearing of this it will be worth our considering, that the greatest affairs of this world, and the most important concernments of this life are all conducted only by *moral* demonstrations. Men every day venture their lives and estates only upon *moral* assurance. For instance, men who never were at the *East* or *West-Indies*, or in *Turky* or *Spain*, yet do venture their whole estate in traffick thither, tho' they have no *Mathematical demonstration* but only *moral assurance* that there are such places. Nay, which is more, men every day eat and drink, tho' I think no man can demonstrate out of *Euclid* or *Apollonius*, that his *Baker* or *Brewer*, or *Cook* have not conveyed poyson into his meat or drink. And that man that would be so wise and cautious as not to eat or drink till he could demonstrate this to himself, I know no other remedy for him but that in great gravity and wisdom he must dye for fear of death. And for any man to urge that tho' men in temporal affairs proceed upon moral assurance, yet there is greater assurance required to make men seek Heaven and avoid Hell, seems to me to be highly unreasonable. For such an assurance of things as will make men circumspect and careful to avoid a lesser danger, ought in all reason to awaken men much more to the avoiding of a greater, such an assurance as will sharpen mens desires and quicken their endeavours for the obtaining of a lesser good ought in all reason to animate men more powerfully, and to inspire them with a greater vigor and industry in the pursuit of that which is infinitely greater. For why the same assurance should not operate as well in a great danger as in a less, in a great good as in a small and inconsiderable one, I can see no reason; unless men will say, that the greatness of an evil danger is an encouragement to men to run upon it, and that the greatness of any good and happiness ought in reason to dishearten men from the pursuit of it.

And now I think I may with reason intreat such as are atheistically inclined, to consider these things seriously and impartially; and if there be weight in these considerations which I have offered to them to sway with reasonable men, I would beg of such that they would not suffer themselves to be byassed by prejudice or passion, or the interest of any lust or worldly advantage, to a contrary persuasion.

First,

First, I would intreat them seriously and diligently to consider these things, because they are of so great moment and concernment to every man. If any thing in the world deserve our serious study and consideration, these principles of Religion do. For what can import us more to be satisfied in than whether there be a God, or not? whether our Souls shall perish with our bodies, or be immortal and shall continue for ever? And if so, whether in that eternal state which remains for men after this life, they shall not be happy or miserable for ever according as they have demeaned themselves in this world? If these things be so, they are of infinite consequence to us; and therefore it highly concerns us to enquire diligently about them, and to satisfy our minds concerning them one way or other. For these are not matters to be slightly and superficially thought upon, much less (as the way of atheistical men is) to be play'd and jested withal. There is no greater argument of a light and inconsiderate person, than profanely to scoff at Religion. It is a sign that that man hath no regard to himself, and that he is not touch'd with a sense of his own interest, who loves to be jesting with edg'd tools and to play with life and death. This is the very mad-man that *Solomon* speaks of, *who casteth firebrands, arrows and death, and saith, Am I not in sport?* To examine severely and debate seriously the principles of Religion, is a thing worthy of a wise man; but if any man shall turn Religion into raillery, and think to confute it by two or three bold jests, this man doth not render Religion, but himself ridiculous, in the opinion of all considerate men; because he sports with his own life. If the principles of Religion were doubtful and uncertain, yet they concern us so nearly that we ought to be serious in the examination of them. And tho they were never so clear and evident, yet they may be made ridiculous by vain and frothy men; as the gravest and wisest person in the world may be abused by being put into a *fool's coat*, and the most noble and excellent Poem may be debased and made vile by being turn'd into *burlesque*. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more largely in my next discourse.

Prov. 26. 18.

So that it concerns every man, that would not trifle away his Soul and fool himself into irrecoverable misery, with the greatest seriousness to enquire into these matters whether they be so or not, and patiently to consider the arguments which are brought for them. For many have miscarried about these things, not because there is not reason and evidence enough for them, but because they have not had patience enough to consider them.

Secondly, Consider these things impartially. All wicked men are of a party against Religion. Some lust or interest engageth them against it. Hence it comes to pass that they are apt to slight the strongest arguments that can be brought for it, and to cry up very weak ones against it. Men do generally and without difficulty assent to *Mathematical* truths, because it is no bodies interest to deny them; but men are slow to believe *moral* and *divine* Truths, because by their lusts and interest they are prejudic'd against them. And therefore you may observe that the more virtuously any man lives, and the less he is inslav'd to any lust, the more ready he is to entertain the principles of Religion.

Therefore when you are examining these matters, do not take into consideration any sensual or worldly interest, but deal clearly and impartially with your selves. Let not temporal and little advantages sway you against a greater and more durable interest. Think thus with your selves, that you have not the making of things true or false, but that the truth and existence of things is already fix'd and settled, and that the principles of Religion are already either determinately true or false before you think of them; either there is a God, or there is not; either your Souls are Immortal, or they are

not; one of these is certain and necessary, and is not now to be altered; the truth of things will not comply with our conceits, and bend it self to our interests. Therefore do not think what you would have to be, but consider impartially what is, and (if it be) will be whether you will or no. Do not reason thus: I would fain be wicked and therefore it is my interest that there should be no God, nor no life after this; and therefore I will endeavour to prove that there is no such thing, and will shew all the favour I can to that *side* of the *question*; I will bend my understanding and wit to strengthen the negative, and will study to make it as true as I can. This is fond, because it is the way to cheat thy self; and that we may do as often as we please, but the nature of things will not be imposed upon. If then thou be as wise as thou oughtest to be, thou wilt reason thus with thy self; my highest interest is not to be deceived about these matters, therefore setting aside all other considerations I will endeavour to know the truth and yield to that.

And now it is time to draw towards a conclusion of this long discourse. And that which I have all this while been endeavouring to convince men of and to persuade them to, is no other but what God himself doth particularly recommend to us as proper for *humane* consideration, *unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* Whoever pretends to reason, and calls himself a *man*, is oblig'd to acknowledge God and to demean himself religiously towards him. For God is to the understanding of man as the light of the Sun is to our eyes, the first and the plainest and the most glorious object of it. He fills Heaven and earth, and every thing in them does represent him to us. Which way soever we turn our selves, we are encountred with clear evidences and sensible demonstrations of a Deity. For (as the *Apostle* reasons) *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead*: εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους *so that they are without excuse*; that is, those men that know not God have no apology to make for themselves. Or if men do know and believe that there is such a being as God, not to consider the proper consequences of such a Principle, not to demean our selves towards him as becomes our relation to him and dependance upon him and the duty which we naturally owe him, this is great stupidity and inconsiderateness. Rom. 1. 20.

And yet he that considers the lives and actions of the greatest part of men would verily think that they understood nothing of all this. Therefore the *Scripture* represents wicked men as without understanding. *It is a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them*: and elsewhere, *have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Not that they are destitute of the natural faculty of understanding, but they do not use it as they ought; they are not blind but they wink, *they detain the truth of God in unrighteousness, and tho' they know God, yet they do not glorify him as God*, nor suffer the apprehensions of him to have a due influence upon their hearts and lives. Deut. 32. 28. Psal. 14. 4.

Men generally stand very much upon the credit and reputation of their understandings, and of all things in the world hate to be accounted fools, because it is so great a reproach. The best way to avoid this imputation and to bring off the credit of our understandings is to be truly religious, *to fear the Lord, and to depart from evil.* For certainly there is no such imprudent person as he that neglects God and his soul, and is careless and slothful about his everlasting concernments; because this man acts contrary to his truest reason and best interest; he neglects his own safety, and is active to procure his own ruin; he flies from happiness and runs away from it as fast as he can, but pursues misery, and makes hast to be undone. Hence it is that *Solomon*

does

does all along in the *Proverbs* give the title of *fool* to a wicked man, as if it were his proper name and the fittest character of him, because he is so eminently such: There is no fool to the sinner, who every moment ventures his Soul, and lays his everlasting interest at the stake. Every time a man provokes God he does the greatest mischief to himself that can be imagined. A mad man that cuts himself and tears his own flesh and dashes his head against the stones does not act so unreasonably as he, because he is not so sensible of what he does. Wickedness is a kind of *voluntary* frenzy and a *chosen* distraction, and every sinner does wilder and more extravagant things than any man can do that is craz'd and out of his wits, only with this sad difference that he knows better what he does. For to them who believe another life after this, an eternal state of happiness or misery in another world, (which is but a reasonable *postulatum* or demand among Christians) there is nothing in *Mathematicks* more demonstrable than the folly of wicked men; for it is not a clearer and more evident principle *that the whole is greater than a part*, than that eternity and the concernments of it are to be preferred before time.

I will therefore put the matter into a temporal Case, that wicked men who understand any thing of the rules and principles of worldly wisdom may see the imprudence of an irreligious and sinful course, and be convinced *that this their way is their folly, even themselves being judges.*

Is that man wise, as to his body and his health, who only cloaths his hands but leaves his whole body naked? who provides only against the tooth-ach, and neglects whole troops of mortal diseases that are ready to rush in upon him? Just thus does he who takes care only for this vile body, but neglects his precious and immortal Soul; who is very solicitous to prevent small and temporal inconveniences, but takes no care *to escape the damnation of hell.*

Is he a prudent man, as to his temporal estate, that lays designs only for a day, without any prospect to, or provision for the Remaining part of his life? even so does he that provides for the short time of this life, but takes no care for all Eternity, which is to be wise for a moment, but a fool for ever, and to act as untowardly and as crosly to the reason of things as can be imagined, to regard time as if it were eternity, and to neglect eternity as if it were but a short time.

Do we count him a wise man, who is wise in any thing but in his own proper profession and employment, wise for every body but himself; who is ingenious to contrive his own misery and to do himself a mischief, but is dull and stupid as to the designing of any real benefit and advantage to himself? Such a one is he, who is ingenious in his Calling but a bad Christian; for Christianity is more our proper calling and profession than the very trades we live upon: and such is every sinner, who is *wise to do evil, but to do good hath no understanding.*

Is it wisdom in any man to neglect and disoblige him who is his best friend, and can be his forest enemy? or with one weak troop to go out to meet him that comes against him with thousands of thousands, to fly a small danger and run upon a greater? Thus does every wicked man that neglects and contemns God, *who can save or destroy him*; who strives with his *Maker and rovoketh the Lord to jealousy*, and with the small and inconsiderable forces of a man takes the field against the *mighty God, the Lord of Hosts*; who *fears them that can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fears not him, who after he hath kill'd, can destroy both body and soul in hell*: and thus does he who for fear of any thing in this world ventures to displease God, for in so doing he runs away from men, and *falls into the hands of the living God*, he flies from a temporal danger and leaps into Hell.

Is not he an imprudent man, who in matters of greatest moment and concernment neglects opportunities never to be retriev'd, who standing upon the shore, and seeing the tide making hast towards him apace, and that he hath but a few minutes to save himself, yet will lay himself to sleep there till the cruel sea rush in upon him and overwhelm him? And is he any better who trifles away this day of God's grace and patience, and foolishly adjourns the necessary work of repentance and the weighty business of Religion to a dying hour?

And to put an end to these questions, Is he wise who hopes to attain the End without the means, nay, by means that are quite contrary to it? such is every wicked man who hopes to be blessed hereafter without being holy here, and to be happy, that is, to find a pleasure in the enjoyment of God and in the company of holy spirits by rendring himself as unsuitable and unlike to them as he can.

Wouldst thou then be truly wise? Be wise for thy self, wise for thy soul, wise for eternity. Resolve upon a religious course of life. *Fear God and depart from evil.* Look beyond things present and sensible unto things which are not seen and are eternal, labour to secure the great interests of another world, and refer all the actions of this short and dying life to that state which will shortly begin but never have an end: and this will approve it self to be wisdom at the last, whatever the world judge of it now. For not that which is approved of men now, but what shall finally be approved by God is true wisdom; that which is esteemed so by him who is the fountain and original of all wisdom, the first rule and measure, the best and most competent judge of it.

I deny not but those that are wicked and neglect Religion may think themselves wise, and may enjoy this their delusion for a while: But there is a time a coming when the most prophane and atheistical, who now account it a piece of Gallantry and an argument of a great spirit and of a more than common wit and understanding to slight God and to baffle Religion and to level all the discourses of another world with the Poetical descriptions of the Fairy-land; I say, there is a day a coming when all these witty fools shall be unhappily undeceived, and not being able to enjoy their delusion any longer shall call themselves fools for ever.

But why should I use so much importunity to persuade men to that which is so excellent, so useful, and so necessary? The thing it self hath allurements in it beyond all arguments: For if Religion be the best knowledge and wisdom I cannot offer any thing beyond this to your understandings to raise your esteem of it, I can present nothing beyond this to your affections to excite your love and desire. All that can be done is to set the thing before men, and to offer it to their choice; and if mens natural desire of wisdom and knowledge and happiness will not persuade them to be religious, 'tis in vain to use arguments; if the sight of these beauties will not charm mens affections, 'tis to no purpose to go about to compel a liking, and to urge and push forward a match to the making whereof consent is necessary. Religion is matter of our freest choice, and if men will obstinately and wilfully set themselves against it there is no remedy. *Pertinaciæ nullum remedium posuit Deus, God has provided no remedy for the obstinacy of men*; but if they will chuse to be fools and to be miserable, he will leave them to inherit their own choice and to enjoy the portion of sinners.

SERMON II.

The Folly of Scoffing at Religion.

2 Pet. III. 3.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.

K*Nowing this first.* In the *verse* before, the *Apostle* was speaking of a famous *prophecy* before the accomplishment of which this sort of men whom he calls *scoffers* should come. *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour; Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers,* &c.

The *prophecy* here spoken of is probably that famous perdiction of the destruction of *Jerusalem* which is in the Prophet *Daniel*, and before the fulfilling whereof our Saviour expresly tells us *false prophets should arise and deceive many.* Mat. 24. 11.

Now the *scoffers* here spoken of are the *false teachers* whom the *Apostle* had been describing all along in the foregoing *Chapter, there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you.* These, he tells us, should proceed to that height of impiety as to scoff at the principles of Religion and to deride the expectations of a future judgment, *In the last days shall come scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?*

In speaking to these words, I shall do these three things.

1. Consider the nature of the sin here mentioned, which is *scoffing* at Religion.

2. The character of the persons that are charg'd with the guilt of this sin, they are said *to walk after their own lusts.*

3. I shall represent to you the heinousness and the aggravations of this vice.

I. *First*, We will consider the nature of the sin here mentioned, which is *scoffing* at Religion, *There shall come scoffers*: These it seems were a sort of people that derided our Saviour's prediction of his coming to judge the world. So the Apostle tells us in the next words, that they said *where is the promise of his coming?*

In those times there was a common perswasion among Christians *that the day of the Lord was at hand,* as the *Apostle* elsewhere tells us. Now this 'tis probable, these *scoffers* twitted the Christians withal; and because Christ did not come when some looked for him they concluded he would not come at all. Upon this they derided the Christians as enduring persecution in a vain expectation of that which was never likely to happen. They saw all things continue *as they were from the beginning of the world,* notwithstanding the 2 Thes. 3. 2.

the apprehensions of Christians concerning the approaching end of it; *For since the Fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the world. Since the Fathers fell asleep*, ἀφ' ἧς, which may either be rendered *from the time*, or else (which seems more agreeable to the atheistical discourse of these men) *saving* or *except that the fathers are fallen asleep, all things continue as they were*; Saving that men dye and one generation succeeds another, they saw no change or alteration. They looked upon all things as going on in a constant course; One generation of men passed away and another came in the room of it, but the world remain'd still as it was. And thus for ought they knew things might hold on for ever. So that the principles of these men seem to be much the same with those of the *Epicureans*, who denied the providence of God and the immortality of mens souls; and consequently a future judgment which should sentence men to rewards and punishments in another world. These great and fundamental principles of all Religion they derided as the fancies and dreams of a company of melancholy men, who were weary of the world and pleased themselves with vain conceits of happiness and ease in another life. But as for them, they believed none of those things; and therefore gave all manner of license and indulgence to their lusts.

But this belongs to the second thing I propounded to speak to, namely,

II. The character which is here given of these *scoffers*; They are said *to walk after their own lusts*. And no wonder if when they denied a future judgment they gave up themselves to all manner of sensuality.

St. *Jude* in his *Epistle* gives much the same character of them that St. *Peter* here does, ver. 18, 19. *There shall come in the last-days mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts, sensual, not having the Spirit.* So that we see what kind of persons they are who prophanely scoff at Religion, men of sensual spirits and of licentious lives. For this character which the *Apostle* here gives of the *scoffers* of that age was not an accidental thing which happened to those persons, but is the constant character of them who deride Religion, and flows from the very temper and disposition of those who are guilty of this impiety; it is both the usual preparation to it, and the natural consequent of it.

To deride God and Religion is the highest kind of impiety. And men do not usually arrive to this degree of wickedness at first, but they come to it by several steps. The *Psalmist* very elegantly expresseth to us the several gradations by which men at last come to this horrid degree of impiety; *Blessed is the man, that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* Men are usually first corrupted by bad counsel and company, which is called *walking in the counsel of the ungodly*; next they habituate themselves to their vicious practices, which is *standing in the way of sinners*; and then at last they take up and settle in a contempt of all Religion, which is called *sitting in the seat of the scornful*. Psal. 1

For when men once indulge themselves in wicked courses, the vicious inclinations of their minds sway their understandings, and make them apt to disbelieve those truths which contradict their lusts. Every inordinate lust and passion is a false byass upon mens understandings which naturally draws toward Atheism. And when mens judgments are once byassed they do not believe according to the evidence of things, but according to their humour and their interest. For when men live as if there were no God it becomes expedient for them that there should be none: And then they endeavour to persuade themselves so, and will be glad to find arguments to fortify them-

ſelves in this perſuaſion. Men of diſſolute lives cry down Religion, becauſe they would not be under the reſtraints of it; they are loth to be tied up by the ſtrict laws and rules of it: 'Tis their intereſt more than any reaſon they have againſt it which makes them deſpiſe it, they hate it becauſe they are reproved by it. So our Saviour tells us, that *men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* Joh. 3. 19, 20.

I remember it is the ſaying of *one*, who hath done more by his *Writings* to debauch the Age with Atheiſtical principles than any man that lives in it; *That when reaſon is againſt a man, then a man will be againſt reaſon.* I am ſure this is the true account of ſuch mens enmity to Religion, Religion is againſt them, and therefore they ſet themſelves againſt Religion. The principles of Religion and the doctrines of the *holy Scriptures* are terrible enemies to wicked men, they are continually flying in their faces and galling their conſciences: And this is that which makes them kick againſt Religion and ſpurn at the doctrines of that *holy Book*. And this may probably be one reaſon why many men, who are obſerved to be ſufficiently dull in other matters, yet can talk prophanely and ſpeak againſt Religion with ſome kind of ſalt and ſmartneſs, becauſe Religion is the thing that frets them; and as in other things ſo in this, *vexatio dat intellectum*, the inward trouble and vexation of their minds gives them ſome kind of wit and ſharpneſs in rallying upon Religion. Their conſciences are galled by it, and this makes them winch and fling as if they had ſome metal. For, let men pretend what they will, there is no eaſe and comfort of mind to be had from atheiſtical principles. 'Tis found by experience, that none are more apprehenſive of danger or more fearful of death than this ſort of men: Even when they are in proſperity they ever and anon feel many inward ſtings and laſhes, but when any great affliction or calamity overtakes them they are the moſt poor-ſpirited creatures in the whole world.

The ſum is; the true reaſon why any man is an Atheiſt is becauſe he is a wicked man. Religion would curb him in his luſts, and therefore he caſts it off and puts all the ſcorn upon it he can. Beſides, that men think it ſome kind of apology for their vices that they do not act contrary to any principle they profeſs: Their practice is agreeable to what they pretend to believe, and ſo they think to vindicate themſelves and their own practices by laughing at thoſe for fools who believe any thing to the contrary.

III. The *third* thing I propounded was, to repreſent to you the heinouſneſs and the aggravations of this vice. And to make this out we will make theſe three ſuppoſitions, which are as many as the thing will bear.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe.

2. Suppoſe the matter were doubtful, and the arguments equal on both ſides.

3. Suppoſe it certain that there is a God, and that the principles of Religion are true. Put the caſe how we will, I ſhall ſhew that the humour is intolerable.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe. Not that there is any reaſon for ſuch a ſuppoſition, but only to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this humour; Put the caſe that theſe men were in the right, in denying the principles of Religion, and that all that they pretend were true; yet ſo long as the generality of mankind believes the contrary, it is certainly a great rudeneſs, or incivility at leaſt, to deride and ſcoff at theſe things. Indeed upon this ſuppoſition there could be no ſuch thing as

ſin, but yet it would be a great offence againſt the laws of civil converſation. Suppoſe then the Atheiſt were wiſer than all the world, and that he did upon good grounds know that all mankind, beſides himſelf and two or three more, were miſtaken about the matters of Religion; yet if he were either ſo wiſe, or ſo civil as he ſhould be, he would keep all this to himſelf, and not affront other men about theſe things.

I remember that that *Law* which God gave to the people of *Iſrael*, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Rulers of thy people*; is rendred by *Joſephus* in a very differenr ſenſe: *What other nations account Gods, let no man blaſpheme.* And this is not ſo different from the *Hebrew* as at firſt ſight one would imagine, for the ſame *Hebrew* word ſignifies both *Gods* and *Rulers*. But whether this be the meaning of that *Law* or not there is a great deal of reaſon in the thing. For though every man have a right in diſpute againſt a falſe Religion, and to urge it with all its abſurd and ridiculous conſequences, as the Ancient *Fathers* did in their diſputes with the *Heathen*; yet it is a barbarous incivility for any man ſcurrilouſly to make ſport with that which others account Religion, nor with any deſign to convince their reaſon but only to provoke their rage.

But now the Atheiſt can pretend no obligation of conſcience why he ſhould ſo much as diſpute againſt the principles of Religion, much leſs deride them. He that pretends to any Religion may pretend conſcience for oppoſing a contrary Religion: But he that denies all Religion, can pretend no conſcience for any thing. A man may be obliged indeed in reaſon and common humanity to free his neighbour from a hurtful error; but ſuppoſing there were no God this notion of a Deity and the Principles of Religion have taken ſuch a deep root in the mind of man that either they are not to be extinguiſhed, or if they be it would be no kindneſs to any man to endeavour it for him, becauſe it is not to be done but with ſo much trouble and violence that the remedy would be worſe than the diſeaſe.

For if this notion of a Deity be founded in a natural fear, it is in vain to attempt to expel it; for whatever violence may be offer'd to nature by endeavouring to reaſon men into a contrary perſuaſion, nature will ſtill recoil and at laſt return to it ſelf, and then the fear will be augmented from the apprehenſion of the dangerous conſequences of ſuch an impiety. So that nothing can create more trouble to a man than to endeavour to diſpoſſeſs him of this conceit, becauſe nature is but irritated by the conteſt, and the man's fears will be doubled upon him.

But if we ſuppoſe this apprehenſion of a Deity to have no foundation in nature, but to have had its riſe from tradition which hath been confirmed in the world by the prejudice of education, the difficulty of removing it will almoſt be as great as if it were natural, that which men take in by education being next to that which is natural. And if it could be extinguiſh'd, yet the advantage of it will not recompence the trouble of the cure. For except the avoiding of perſecution for Religion, there is no advantage that the principles of Atheiſm if they could be quietly ſettled in a man's mind can give him. The advantage indeed that men make of them is to give themſelves the liberty to do what they pleaſe, to be more ſenſual and more unjuſt than other men; that is, they have the priviledge to ſurfeit themſelves and to be ſick oftner than other men, and to make mankind their enemy by their unjuſt and diſhoneſt actions, and conſequently to live more uneaſily in the world than other men.

So that the principles of Religion, the *belief of a God*, and *another life*, by obliging men to be virtuous do really promote their temporal happineſs.

And

And all the priviledge that Atheiſm pretends to is to let men looſe to vice, which is naturally attended with temporal inconveniences. And if this be true, then the Atheiſt cannot pretend this reaſon of charity to mankind (which is the only one I can think of) to diſpute againſt Religion, much leſs to rally upon it. For it is plain, that it would be no kindneſs to any man to be undeceived in theſe principles of Religion, ſuppoſing they were falſe. Becauſe the principles of Religion are ſo far from hindring, that they promote a man's happineſs even in this world, and as to the other world there can be no inconvenience in the miſtake, for when a man is not, it will be no trouble to him that he was once deceived about theſe matters.

And where no obligation of Conſcience nor of reaſon can be pretended, there certainly the laws of civility ought to take place. Now men do profeſs to believe that there is a God, and that the common principles of Religion are true, and to have a great veneration for theſe things. Can there then be a greater inſolence, than for a man when he comes into company to rally and fall foul upon thoſe things for which he knows the company have a reverence? Can one man offer a greater affront to another, than to expoſe to ſcorn him whom he owns and declares to be his beſt friend, the patron of his life, and the greateſt benefactor he hath in the world? And doth not every man that owns a God ſay this of him?

But when the generality of Mankind are of the ſame opinion the rudeneſs is ſtill the greater. So that whoever doth openly contemn God and Religion does *delinquere in majeſtatem populi & humani generis*, he does offend againſt the majeſty of the People and that reverence which is due to the common apprehenſions of mankind, whether they be true or not; which is the greateſt incivility that can be imagin'd.

This is the firſt conſideration, and it is the leaſt that I have to urge in this matter. But yet I have inſiſted the longer upon it, becauſe it is ſuch a one as ought eſpecially to prevail upon thoſe who I am afraid are too often guilty of this vice, I mean thoſe who are of better breeding, becauſe they pretend to underſtand the laws of behaviour and the decencies of converſation better than other men.

2. Suppoſing it were doubtful whether there be a God or not, and whether the Principles of Religion were true or not, and that the Arguments were equal on both ſides; yet it would be a great folly to deride theſe things. And here I ſuppoſe as much as the Atheiſt can with any colour of reaſon pretend to. For no man ever yet pretended to demonſtrate that there is no God, nor no life after this. For theſe being pure negatives are capable of no proof, unleſs a man could ſhew them to be plainly impoſſible. The utmoſt that is pretended is that the arguments that are brought for theſe things are not ſufficient to convince. But if they were only probable, ſo long as no arguments are produced to the contrary, that cannot in reaſon be denied to be a great advantage.

But I will for the preſent ſuppoſe the probabilities equal on both ſides. And upon this ſuppoſition I doubt not to make it appear to be a monſtrous folly to deride theſe things. Becauſe tho the arguments on both ſides were equal, yet the danger and hazard is infinitely unequal.

If it prove true that there is no God the religious man may be as happy in this world as the Atheiſt, nay the principles of Religion and Virtue do in their own nature tend to make him happier. Becauſe they give ſatisfaction to his mind, and his conſcience by this means is freed from many fearful girds and twinges which the Atheiſt feels. Beſides, that the practice of Religion and virtue doth naturally promote our temporal felicity. It is more

for

for a man's health, and more for his reputation, and more for his advantage in all other worldly respects to lead a virtuous than a vicious course of life. And for the other world, if there be no God the case of the religious man and the Atheist will be alike, because they will both be extinguish'd by death and insensible of any farther happiness or misery.

But then if the contrary opinion should prove true, that there is a God; and that the souls of men are transmitted out of this world into the other, there to receive the just reward of their actions: Then it is plain to every man at first sight, that the case of the religious man and the Atheist must be vastly different: Then, where shall the wicked, and the ungodly appear? And what think we shall be the portion of those who have affronted God, and derided his word, and made a mock of every thing that is sacred and religious? What can they expect but to be rejected by him whom they have renounced, and to feel the terrible effects of that power and Justice which they have despised? So that tho the arguments on both sides were equal, yet the danger is not so. On the one side there is none at all, but 'tis infinite on the other. And consequently, it must be a monstrous folly for any man to make a mock of those things which he knows not whether they be or not; and if they be, of all things in the world they are no jesting matters.

3. Suppose there be a God, and that the principles of Religion are true, then is it not only a heinous impiety but a perfect madness to scoff at these things. And that there is a God, and that the Principles of Religion are true, I have already in my former *discourse* endeavour'd to prove; both from the things which are made, and from the general consent of mankind in these principles; of which universal consent no sufficient Reason can be given unless they were true. And supposing they are so, it is not only the utmost pitch of impiety, but the highest flight of folly that can be imagined to deride these things. To be disobedient to the commands of God is a great contempt, but to deny his *Being*, and to make sport with his *word*, and to endeavour to render it ridiculous by turning the wise and weighty sayings of that *Holy Book* into raillery, is a most direct affront to the God that is above. Thus the *Psalmist* describes these atheistical persons as levelling their blasphemies immediately against the Majesty of Heaven. *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth*; they do mischief among men, but the affront is immediately to God.

Besides, that this prophane spirit is an argument of a most incorrigible temper. The *Wise man* every where speaks of the *scorner* as one of the worst sort of sinners and hardest to be reclaimed, because he *despiseth instruction* and mocks at all the means whereby he should be reformed.

And then, is it not a most black and horrid ingratitude thus to use the Author of our Beings and the Patron of our Lives; to make a scorn of him that made us, and to live in an open defiance of him *in whom we live, move, and have our beings?* But this is not all. As it is a most heinous so it is a most dangerous impiety, to despise him that can destroy us, and to oppose him who is infinitely more powerful than we are *Will ye* (says the Apostle) *provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?* What *Gamaliel* said to the *Jews*, in another case, may with a little change be applied to this sort of men; If there be a God, and the principles of Religion be true, *ye cannot overthrow them, therefore refrain from speaking against these things, lest ye be found fighters against God.*

I will but add one thing more to shew the folly of this prophane temper. And that is this, that as it is the greatest of all other sins so there is in truth the least temptation to it. When the Devil tempts men with riches or

honour

honour to ruin themſelves he offers them ſome kind of conſideration: But the prophane perſon ſerves the Devil for nought, and ſins only for ſin's ſake, ſuffers himſelf to be tempted to the greateſt ſins and into the greateſt dangers for no other reward but the ſlender reputation of ſeeming to ſay that wittily which no wiſe man would ſay. And what a folly is this, for a man to offend his conſcience to pleaſe his humour, and only for his jeſt to loſe two of the beſt Friends he hath in the world, God and his own ſoul?

I have done with the *three* things I prepounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument. And now I beg your patience to apply what I have ſaid to theſe three purpoſes.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly of prophaneneſs which by ſome is miſcalled wit.

2. To caution men not to think the worſe of Religion, becauſe ſome are ſo bold as to deſpiſe and deride it.

3. To perſuade men to employ that reaſon and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purpoſes, in the ſervice and to the glory of that God who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly. I know not how it comes to paſs that ſome men have the fortune to be eſteemed Wits only for jeſting out of the common road, and for making bold to ſcoff at thoſe things which the greateſt part of mankind reverence. As if a man ſhould be accounted a Wit for reviling thoſe in Authority which is no more an argument of any man's wit than it is of his diſcretion. A wiſe man would not ſpeak contemptuouſly of a great Prince though he were out of his Dominions, becauſe he remembers that Kings have long hands, and that their power and influence does many times reach a great way farther than their direct Authority. But God *is a great King, and in his hands are all the corners of the earth; we can go no whither from his Spirit, nor can we flee from his preſence*; where ever we are *his eyes ſee us* and *his right hand* can reach us. If men did truly conſult the intereſt either of their ſafety or reputation, they would never exerciſe their wit in dangerous matters. Wit is a very commendable quality, but then a wiſe man ſhould always have the keeping of it. It is a ſharp weapon, as apt for miſchief as for good purpoſes if it be not well manag'd. The proper uſe of it is to ſeaſon converſation, to repreſent what is praiſe-worthy to the greateſt advantage, and to expoſe the vices and follies of men, ſuch things as are in themſelves truly ridiculous: But if it be applied to the abuſe of the graveſt and moſt ſerious matters it then loſes its commendation. If any man think he abounds in this quality and hath wit to ſpare there is ſcope enough for it within the bounds of Religion and decency, and when it tranſgreſſeth theſe it degenerates into inſolence and impiety. All wit which borders upon prophaneneſs and makes bold with thoſe things to which the greateſt reverence is due deſerves to be branded for folly.

And if we would preſerve our ſelves from the infection of this vice we muſt take heed how we ſcoff at Religion, under any form, leſt inſenſibly we derive ſome contempt upon Religion it ſelf. And we muſt likewiſe take heed how we accuſtom our ſelves to a ſlight and irreverent uſe of the Name of God, and of the phraſes and expreſſions of the Holy Bible, which ought not to be applied upon every light occaſion. Men will eaſily ſlide into the higheſt degree of prophaneneſs who are not careful to preſerve a due reverence of the great and glorious Name of God, and an awful regard to the Holy Scriptures. None ſo nearly diſpoſed to ſcoffing at Religion as thoſe who have accuſtomed themſelves to ſwear upon trifling occaſions. For it is

just with God to permit those who allow themselves in one degree of prophaneness to proceed to another, till at last they come to that height of impiety as to contemn all Religion.

2. Let no man think the worse of Religion, because some are so bold as to despise and deride it. For 'tis no disparagement to any person or thing to be laught at, but to deserve to be so. The most grave and serious matters in the whole world are liable to be abus'd. It is a known saying of *Epictetus*, *that every thing hath two handles*; By which he means, that there is nothing so bad but a man may lay hold of something or other about it that will afford matter of excuse and extenuation, nor nothing so excellent but a man may fasten upon something or other belonging to it whereby to traduce it. A sharp wit may find something in the wisest man whereby to expose him to the contempt of injudicious people. The gravest Book that ever was written may be made ridiculous by applying the sayings of it to a foolish purpose. For a jest may be obtruded upon any thing. And therefore no man ought to have the less reverence for the principles of Religion, or for the holy Scriptures, because idle and prophane Wits can break jests upon them. Nothing is so easy as to take particular phrases and expressions out of the best Book in the world and to abuse them by forcing an odd and ridiculous sense upon them. But no wise man will think a good Book foolish for this reason, but the man that abuses it; nor will he esteem that to which every thing is liable to be a just exception against any thing. At this rate we must despise all things, but surely the better and the shorter way is to contemn those who would bring any thing that is worthy into contempt.

3. And lastly, to persuade men to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them to better and nobler purposes in the service and to the glory of that God who hath bestowed these gifts on men, as *Aholiab* and *Bezaleel* did their mechanical skill in the adorning and beautifying of God's Tabernacle. For this is the perfection of every thing, to attain its true and proper end; and the end of all those gifts and endowments which God hath given us is to glorify the giver.

Here is subject enough to exercise the wit of men and angels: To praise that infinite goodness, and almighty power, and exquisite wisdom which made us and all things; and to admire what we can never sufficiently praise; To vindicate the wise and just providence of God, in the government of the world; and to endeavour, as well as we can upon an imperfect view of things, to make out the beauty and harmony of all the seeming discords and irregularities of the Divine administrations; To explain the oracles of the holy Scriptures, and to adore that great mystery of Divine love (which the Angels, better and nobler Creatures than we are, desire to pry into) God's sending his only Son into the world to save sinners, and to give his life a ransom for them: These would be noble exercises indeed for the tongues and pens of the greatest Wits. And subjects of this nature are the best trials of our ability in this kind. Satyr and invective are the easiest kind of wit. Almost any degree of it will serve to abuse and find fault. For wit is a keen instrument, and every one can cut and gash with it, but to carve a beautiful image and to polish it requires great art and dexterity. To praise any thing well is an argument of much more wit, than to abuse. A little wit, and a great deal of ill nature will furnish a man for Satyr, but the greatest instance of wit is to commend well. And perhaps the best things are the hardest to be duly commended. For tho there be a great deal of matter to work upon yet there is great judgment required to make choice. And where the subject is great and excellent it is hard not to sink below the dignity of it.

This I say on purpose to recommend to men a nobler exercise for their wits, and if it be possible, to put them out of conceit with that scoffing humour which is so easy, and so ill-natur'd, and is not only an enemy to Religion but to every thing else that is wise and worthy. And I am very much mistaken, if the state as well as the Church, the civil government as well as Religion, do not in a short space find the intolerable inconvenience of this humour.

But I confine my self to the consideration of Religion. And it is sad indeed, that in a Nation professing Christianity so horrid an impiety should dare to appear. But the Scripture hath foretold us that this sort of men should arise in the Gospel-age, and they did appear even in the Apostles days. That which is more sad and strange is, that we should persist in this prophaneness notwithstanding the terrible judgments of God which have been abroad in this Nation. God hath of late years manifested himself in a very dreadful manner, as if it were on purpose to give a check to this insolent impiety. And now that those judgments have done no good upon us we may justly fear that he will appear once for all. And 'tis time for him to shew himself when his very Being is call'd in question, and to come and judge the world when men begin to doubt whether he made it.

The *Scripture* mentions two things as the fore-runners and reasons of his coming to judgment, *infidelity*, and *prophane scoffing* at Religion. *When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?* (Luk. 18.8.) And St. *Jude* out of an ancient prophecy of *Enoch* expresly mentions this as one reason of the coming of the Lord, *to convince ungodly sinners of all their hard speeches which they had spoken against him.* (Jude. 15. ver.)

And if these things be a sign and reason of his coming, I wish that we in this Age had not too much cause to apprehend *the Judge to be at the door.* This impiety did forerun the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the utter ruin of the *Jewish* Nation. And if it hold on amongst us, may not we have reason to fear that either *the end of all things is at hand*, or that some very dismal calamity greater than any our eyes have yet seen does hang over us? But I would fain hope that God hath mercy still for us, and that men will pity themselves, and *repent, and give glory to God*, and *know in this their day the things that belong to their peace.* Which God of his infinite mercy grant for the sake of Christ, To whom with the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Advantages of Religion to Societies.

PROV. XIV. 34.

Righteousness exalteth a Nation; but sin is the reproach of any people.

ONE of the first principles that is planted in the nature of man, and which lies at the very root and foundation of his being is the desire of his own preservation and happiness. Hence it is that every man is led by interest, and does love or hate, chuse or refuse things, according as he apprehends them to conduce to this end, or to contradict it. And because the happiness of this life is most present and sensible, therefore human nature (which in this degenerate state is extremely sunk down into sense) is most powerfully affected with sensible and temporal things. And consequently, there cannot be a greater prejudice raised against any thing than to have it represented as inconvenient and hurtful to our temporal interests.

Upon this account it is that Religion hath extremely suffer'd in the opinion of many as if it were opposite to our present welfare, and did rob men of the greatest advantages and conveniences of life. So that he that would do right to Religion, and make a ready way for the entertainment of it among men, cannot take a more effectual course than by reconciling it with the happiness of mankind and by giving satisfaction to our reason, that it is so far from being an enemy that it is the greatest friend to our temporal interests; and that it doth not only tend to make every man happy consider'd singly and in a private capacity, but is excellently fitted for the benefit of human society.

How much Religion tends even to the temporal advantage of private persons I shall not now consider, because my Text leads me to discourse of the other, namely, to shew how advantageous Religion and Virtue are to the publick prosperity of a Nation, which I take to be the meaning of this *Aphorism* of *Solomon*, *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, &c.

And here I shall not restrain *righteousness* to the particular virtue of justice (tho in this sense also this saying is most true) but enlarge it according to the *genius* and strain of the Book of the *Proverbs*, in which the words *wisdom* and *righteousness* are commonly used very comprehensively so as to signify all Religion and Virtue. And that this word is so to be taken in the Text may appear farther from the opposition of it to sin or vice in general; *Righteousness* exalteth a Nation, but *Sin* is the reproach of any People.

You see then what will be the subject of my present discourse; namely, that *Religion and Virtue are the great causes of publick happiness and prosperity*.

And though the truth of this hath been universally acknowledged and long enough experienced in the world, yet because the fashion of the age is to call every thing into question, it will be requisite to satisfy mens reason about it. To which end I shall do these two things.

 1. Endea-

1. Endeavour to give an account of this Truth.

2. To vindicate it from the pretences and insinuations of atheistical persons.

I shall give you this twofold account of it.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence.

2. From the natural tendency of the thing.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence. Indeed, as to particular persons, the providences of God are many times promiscuously administred in this world; so that no man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any person by any thing that befals him in this life. But God does not deal thus with Nations. Because publick bodies and communities of men, as such, can only be rewarded and punished in this world. For in the next, all those publick societies and combinations wherein men are now link'd together under several Governments, shall be dissolved. God will not then reward or punish Nations, as Nations; But every man shall then give an account of himself to God, and receive his own reward, and bear his own burthen. For altho' God account it no disparagement to his justice to let particular good men suffer in this world and pass *through many tribulations into the kingdom of God,* because there is another day a coming which will be a more proper season of reward; yet in the usual course of his providence he recompenceth religious and virtuous Nations with temporal blessings and prosperity. For which reason St. *Austin* tells us that the mighty success and long prosperity of the *Romans* was a reward given them by God for their eminent justice and temperance, and other virtues. And on the other hand, God many times suffers the most grievous sins of particular persons to go unpunished in this world, because he knows that his justice will have another and better opportunity to meet and reckon with them. But the general and crying sins of a Nation cannot hope to escape publick judgments, unless they be prevented by a general repentance. God may defer his judgments for a time and give a People a longer space of repentance, he may stay till the iniquities of a Nation be full, but sooner or later they have reason to expect his vengeance. And usually the longer punishment is delay'd it is the heavier when it comes.

Now all this is very reasonable, because this world is the only season for National punishments. And indeed they are in a great degree necessary for the present vindication of the honour and majesty of the Divine Laws, and to give some check to the overflowing of wickedness. Publick judgments are the banks and shores upon which God breaks the insolency of sinners and stays their proud waves. And though among men the multitude of offenders be many times a cause of impunity, because of the weakness of human Governments which are glad to spare where they are not strong enough to punish, yet in the government of God, things are quite otherwise. No combination of sinners is too hard for him, and the greater and more numerous the offenders are, the more his justice is concern'd to vindicate the affront. However God may pass by single sinners in this world, yet when a Nation combines against him, *when hand joins in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished.*

This the *Scripture* declares to be the settled course of God's providence; That a righteous Nation shall be happy; *The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effects of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.* And on the other hand, that he useth to shower down his judgments upon a wicked people, *he turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*

And the experience of all ages hath made this good. All along the History of the *Old Testament*, we find the interchangeable providences of God towards the People of *Israel* always suited to their manners. They were constantly prosperous or afflicted according as piety and virtue flourished or declined amongst them. And God did not not only exercise this providence towards his own People, but he dealt thus also with other nations. The *Roman Empire* whilst the virtue of that people remained firm was *strong as iron*, as 'tis represented in the Prophecy of *Daniel* : But upon the dissolution of their manners the *iron* began *to be mixt with miry clay*, and the *feet* upon which that Empire stood, *to be broken*. And tho God in the administration of his justice be not tied to precedents, and we cannot argue from Scripture-examples that the providences of God towards other Nations shall in all circumstances be conformable to his dealings with the People of *Israel*; yet thus much may with great probability be collected from them, that as God always blessed that People while they were obedient to him, and followed them with his judgments when they rebelled against him, so he will also deal with other Nations. Because the reason of those dispensations as to the main and substance of them seems to be perpetual, and founded in that which can never change, the justice of the Divine providence.

2*dly*. The truth of this farther appears from the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion in general, and every particular virtue, doth in its own nature conduce to the publick Interest.

Religion, where-ever it is truly planted is certainly the greatest obligation upon conscience to all civil offices and moral duties. Chastity and temperance and industry do in their own nature tend to health and plenty. Truth and fidelity in all our dealings do create mutual love and good-will and confidence among men, which are the great bands of peace. And on the contrary, wickedness doth in its own nature produce many publick mischiefs. For as sins are link'd together and draw on one another, so almost every vice hath some temporal inconvenience annexed to it and naturally following it. Intemperance and lust breed infirmities and diseases, which being propagated spoil the strain of a Nation. Idleness and luxury bring forth poverty and want; and this tempts men to injustice, and that causeth enmity and animosities, and these bring on *strife* and *confusion and every evil work*. This Philosophical account of publick troubles and confusions St. *James* gives us, *Whence come wars and fightings among you? are they not* Jam. 4: 1
hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?

But I shall shew more particularly, that Religion and virtue do naturally tend to the good order and more easy government of human Society, because they have a good influence both upon Magistrates and Subjects.

1. Upon Magistrates. Religion teacheth them to rule over men in the fear of God, because tho they be Gods on earth yet they are subjects of Heaven, and accountable to Him who is higher than the highest in this world. Religion in a Magistrate strengthens his authority, because it procures veneration and gains a reputation to it. And in all the affairs of this world so much reputation is really so much power. We see that piety and virtue, where they are found among men of lower degree, will command some reverence and respect : But in persons of eminent place and dignity they are seated to a great advantage, so as to cast a lustre upon their very Place and by a strong reflexion to double the beams of Majesty. Whereas impiety and vice do strangely lessen greatness, and do secretly and unavoidably derive some weakness upon authority it self. Of this the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable instance in *David*. For among other things which made *the*

Sons of Zerviah too hard for him this probably was none of the least, that they were particularly conscious to his crimes.

2. Religion hath a good influence upon the People; to make them obedient to Government, and peaceable one towards another.

1. To make them obedient to Government, and conformable to Laws; and that *not only for wrath* and out of fear of the Magistrates power, which is but a weak and loose principle of obedience, and will cease, when ever men can rebel with safety, and to advantage; but out *of Conscience*, which is a firm, and constant and lasting principle, and will hold a man fast when all other obligations will break. He that hath entertain'd the true principles of Christianity is not to be tempted from his obedience and subjection by any worldly considerations, because he believes that *whosoever resisteth authority resisteth the ordinance of God*, and that *they who resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

2. Religion tends to make men peaceable one towards another. For it endeavours to plant all those qualities and dispositions in men which tend to peace and unity, and to fill men with a spirit of universal love and good will. It endeavours likewise to secure every man's interest by commanding the observation of that great rule of equity, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them*; by enjoining that truth and fidelity be inviolably observed in all our words, promises and contracts. And in order hereunto it requires the extirpation of all those passions and vices which render men unsociable and troublesome to one another, as pride, covetousness and injustice, hatred and revenge and cruelty; and those likewise which are not so commonly reputed vices, as self-conceit and peremptoriness in a man's own opinion, and all peevishness, and incompliance of humour in things lawful and indifferent.

And that these are the proper effects of true piety the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles every where teacheth us. Now if this be the design of Religion to bring us to this temper, thus to heal the natures of men and to sweeten their spirits, to correct their passions and to mortify all those lusts which are the causes of enmity and division, then it is evident that in its own nature it tends to the peace and happiness of human society; and that if men would but live as Religion requires they should do, the world would be a quiet habitation, a most lovely and desirable place in comparison of what now it is. And indeed the true reason why the societies of men are so full of tumult and disorder, so troublesome and tempestuous, is because there is so little of true Religion among men; so that were it not for some small remainders of piety and virtue which are yet left scatter'd among mankind, human society would in a short space disband and run into confusion, the earth would grow wild and become a great forest, and mankind would become beasts of prey one towards another. And if this discourse hold true surely then one would think that virtue should find it self a seat where-ever human societies are, and that Religion should be owned and encouraged in the world until men cease to be governed by reason.

II. I come to vindicate this truth from the insinuations and pretences of atheistical persons. I shall mention two.

1. That government may subsist well enough without the belief of a God and a state of rewards and punishments after this life.

2. That as for virtue and vice they are arbitrary things.

1. That Government may subsist well enough without the belief of a God

or a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life. And this the Atheiſt does and muſt aſſert, otherwiſe he is by his own confeſſion a declared enemy to Government and unfit to live in humane ſociety.

For anſwer to this, I will not deny but that tho the generality of men did not believe any ſuperior Being nor any rewards and puniſhments after this life, yet notwithſtanding this there might be ſome kind of Government kept up in the world. For ſuppoſing men to have reaſon, the neceſſities of humane nature and the miſchiefs of confuſion would probably compel them into ſome kind of order. But then I ſay withal, that if theſe principles were baniſhed out of the world Government would be far more difficult than now it is, becauſe it would want its firmeſt Baſis and foundation; there would be infinitely more diſorders in the world if men were reſtrained from injuſtice and violence only by humane laws, and not by principles of conſcience and the dread of another world. Therefore Magiſtrates have always thought themſelves concerned to cheriſh Religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God and another life. Nay that common ſuggeſtion of atheiſtical perſons, that Religion was at firſt a politick device and is ſtill kept up in the world as a State engine to awe men into obedience, is a clear acknowledgment of the uſefulneſs of it to the ends of Government, and does as fully contradict that pretence of theirs which I am now confuting as any thing that can be ſaid.

2. That virtue and vice are arbitrary things founded only in the imaginations of men and in the conſtitutions and cuſtoms of the world, but not in the nature of the things themſelves; and that *that* is virtue or vice, good or evil, which the Supreme Authority of a Nation declares to be ſo. And this is frequently and confidently aſſerted by the ingenious Author of a very bad Book, I mean the *Leviathan.*

Now the proper way of anſwering any thing that is confidently aſſerted is to ſhew the contrary, namely, That there are ſome things that have a natural evil and deformity in them, as perjury, perfidiouſneſs, unrighteouſneſs and ingratitude, which are things not only condemned by the poſitive laws and conſtitutions of particular Nations and Governments but by the general verdict of humane nature: And that the virtues contrary to theſe have a natural goodneſs and comlineſs in them, and are ſuitable to the common principles and ſentiments of humanity.

And this will moſt evidently appear by putting this ſuppoſition. Suppoſe the reverſe of all that which we now call virtue were ſolemnly enacted, and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, and falſeneſs to a man's word, and all manner of vice and wickedneſs were eſtabliſhed by a Law. I ask now, if the caſe between virtue and vice were thus alter'd, would that which we now call vice in proceſs of time gain the reputation of virtue, and that which we now call virtue grow odious and contemptible to human nature? If it would not, then is there ſomething in the nature of good and evil, of virtue and vice, which does not depend upon the pleaſure of authority, nor is ſubject to any arbitrary Conſtitution. But that it would not be thus I am very certain, becauſe no Government could ſubſiſt upon theſe terms. For the very enjoining of fraud and rapine and perjury and breach of truſt doth apparently deſtroy the greateſt end of Government, which is to preſerve men in their rights againſt the encroachments of fraud and violence. And this end being deſtroyed human ſocieties would preſently fly in pieces and men would neceſſarily fall into a ſtate of war. Which plainly ſhews that virtue and vice are not arbitrary things, but that there is a natural and immutable and eternal reaſon for that which

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we call goodness and virtue, and against that which we call vice and wickedness.

Thus I have endeavoured to evidence and vindicate this truth. I shall only draw an Inference or two from this discourse, and so conclude.

1. If this discourse be true, then those who are in place of power and authority are peculiarly concerned to maintain the honour of Religion.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of it.

1. Magistrates are concerned to maintain the honour of Religion, which doth not only tend to every man's future happiness, but is the best instrument of Civil Government and of the temporal prosperity of a Nation. For the whole design of it is to procure the private and publick happiness of mankind, and to restrain men from all those things which would make them miserable and guilty to themselves, unpeaceable and troublesome to the world. Religion hath so great an influence upon the felicity of men that it ought to be upheld, and the veneration of it maintained, not only out of a just dread of the Divine vengeance in another world, but out of regard to the temporal peace and prosperity of men. It will require all the kindness and honour we can do it by the advantages it will bring to Civil Government, and by the blessings it will draw down upon it. God hath promised that *those that honour him, he will honour*, and in the common course of his providence he usually makes this good, so that the civil Authority ought to be very tender of the honour of God and Religion, if for no other reason yet out of *reason of State*.

It were to be wish'd that all men were so piously disposed, that Religion by its own authority and the reasonable force of it might be sufficient to establish its Empire in the minds of men. But the corruptions of men will always make a strong opposition against it. And therefore at the first planting of the Christian Religion in the world God was pleased to accompany it with a miraculous power: But after it was planted this extraordinary power ceased, and God hath now left it to be maintained and supported by more ordinary and human ways, by the countenance of Authority, and assistance of Laws; which were never more necessary than in this degenerate age, which is prodigiously sunk into Atheism and prophaneness, and is running headlong into an humour of scoffing at God and Religion and every thing that is sacred. For some ages before the Reformation Atheism was confined to *Italy*, and had its chief residence at *Rome*. All the mention that is of it in the History of those times the Papists themselves give us in the lives of their own Popes and Cardinals, excepting two or three small Philosophers that were retainers to that Court. So that this Atheistical humour among Christians was the spawn of the gross superstitions and corrupt manners of the *Romish* Church and Court. And indeed nothing is more natural than for extremes in Religion to beget one another, like the vibrations of a *pendulum* which the more violently you swing it one way the farther it will return the other. But in the last age, Atheism travell'd over the *Alps* and infected *France*, and now of late it hath crossed the Seas and invaded our Nation and hath prevailed to amazement: For I do not think that there are any people in the World that are generally more indisposed to it and can worse brook it, seriousness and zeal in Religion being almost the natural temper of the *English*. So that nothing is to me matter of greater wonder, than that in a grave and sober Nation prophaneness should ever come to gain so much ground, and the best and the wisest Religion in the world to be made the

the scorn of fools. For besides the prophane and atheistical discourses about God and Religion, and the bold and senseless abuses of this *sacred Book* the great instruments of our salvation, which are so frequent in the publick places of resort; I say, besides these (I speak it knowingly) a man can hardly pass the streets without having his ears grated and pierced with such horrid and blasphemous oaths and curses as are enough, if we were guilty of no other sin, to sink a Nation. And this not only from the *Tribe* that wear Liveries, but from those that go before them and should give better example. Is it not then high time that the Laws should provide by the most prudent and effectual means to curb these bold and insolent defiers of Heaven, who take a pride in being monsters, and boast themselves in the follies and deformities of human nature? The Heathens would never suffer their Gods to be reviled, which yet were no Gods. And shall it among the professors of the true Religion be allowed to any man to make a mock of Him that made Heaven and Earth, and to breathe out blasphemies against Him who gives us life and breath and all things? I doubt not but hypocrisy is a great wickedness and very odious to God, but by no means of so pernicious example as open prophaneness. Hypocrisy is a more modest way of sinning, it shews some reverence to Religion, and does so far own the worth and excellency of it as to acknowledge that it deserves to be counterfeited: Whereas prophaneness declares openly against it, and endeavours to make a party to drive it out of the world.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of Religion and Virtue; Because the publick happiness and prosperity depends upon it. It is most apparent that of late years Religion is very sensibly declin'd among us. The manners of men have almost been universally corrupted by a Civil War. We should therefore all jointly endeavour to retrieve the ancient virtue of the Nation, and to bring into fashion again that solid and substantial, that plain and unaffected piety, (free from the extremes both of superstition and enthusiasm) which flourished in the age of our immediate Forefathers. Which did not consist in idle talk but in real effects, in a sincere love of God and of our neighbour, in a pious devotion and reverence towards the Divine Majesty, and in the virtuous actions of a good life; in the denial of *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and *in living soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.* This were the true way to reconcile God to us, to stop the course of his judgments, and to bring down the blessings of Heaven upon us.

God hath now been pleased to settle us again in peace both at home and abroad, and he hath put us once more into the hands of our own counsel. Life and Death, blessing and cursing, prosperity and destruction are before us. We may chuse our own fortune, and if we be not wanting to our selves we may under the influences of God's grace and assistance, which is never wanting to our sincere endeavours, become a happy and a prosperous People.

The good God make us all wise to know and to do the things that belong to the temporal peace and prosperity of the Nation, and to the eternal happiness and salvation of every one of our souls; which we humbly beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

SERMON IV.

The Advantages of Religion to particular Perſons.

PSALM XIX. 11.

And in keeping of them there is great reward.

IN this *Pſalm David* celebrates the glory of God from the conſideration of the greatneſs of his Works, and the perfection of his Laws. From the greatneſs of his Works, *verſe* 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-work*, &c. From the perfection of his Laws, *ver.* 7. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul*, &c. And among many other excellencies of the Divine Laws, he mentions in the laſt place the benefits and advantages which come from the obſervance of them, *verſe* 11. *and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

I have already ſhown how much Religion tends to the publick welfare of mankind; to the ſupport of Government, and to the peace and happineſs of human Societies. My work at this time ſhall be to ſhew that Religion and obedience to the Laws of God do likewiſe conduce to the happineſs of particular perſons, both in reſpect of this world and the other. For tho' there be but little expreſs mention made in the *Old Teſtament* of the immortality of the Soul and the rewards of another life, yet all Religion does ſuppoſe theſe principles, and is built upon them.

I. And *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew how Religion conduceth to the happineſs of this life; and that both in reſpect of the inward and outward man.

Firſt, As to the mind; to be pious and religious brings a double advantage to the mind of man. 1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings. 2. It brings peace and pleaſure to our minds.

1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings: I do not mean only that it inſtructs us in the knowledge of divine and ſpiritual things, and makes us to underſtand the great intereſt of our ſouls and the concernments of eternity better, but that in general it does raiſe and enlarge the minds of men and make them more capable of true knowledge. And in this ſenſe I underſtand the following Texts; *The commandment of the Lord is pure,*
Pſal. 19. 8. Pſal. 111. *enlightning the eyes; The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom, a good*
10. *underſtanding have all they that keep his commandments; Thou through thy com-*
Pſal. 119. 98. *mandments haſt made me wiſer than mine enemies*, which plainly refers to po-
ver. 99. litical prudence; *I have more underſtanding than all my teachers, for thy Teſtimonies are my meditation, I underſtand more than the ancients, becauſe I keep*
ver. 104. *thy precepts; Through thy precepts I get underſtanding; The entrance of thy*
ver. 130. *word giveth light, it giveth underſtanding to the ſimple.*

Now Religion doth improve the underſtandings of men by ſubduing their luſts, and moderating their paſſions. The luſts and paſſions of men do ſully and darken their minds, even by a natural influence. Intemperance and ſenſuality and fleſhly luſts do debaſe mens minds, and clog their ſpirits, make

make them grofs and foul, liftlefs and unactive; they fink us down into fenfe, and glew us to thefe low and inferior things like *birdlime*; they hamper and entangle our fouls, and hinder their flight upwards; they indifpofe and unfit our minds for the moft noble and intellectual confiderations. So likewife the exorbitant paffions of wrath and malice, envy and revenge, do darken and diftort the underftandings of men, do tincture the mind with falfe colours and fill it with prejudice and undue apprehenfions of things.

There is no man that is intemperate, or luftful, or paffionate, but befides the guilt he contracts which is continually fretting and difquieting his mind, befides the inconveniences he brings upon himfelf as to his health, he does likewife ftain and obfcure the brightnefs of his Soul and the clearnefs of his difcerning faculty. Such perfons have not that free ufe of their reafon that they might have; their underftandings are not bright enough, nor their fpirits pure and fine enough for the exercife of the higheft and nobleft acts of reafon. What clearnefs is to the eye, that purity is to our mind and underftanding, and as the clearnefs of the bodily eye doth difpofe it for a quicker fight of material objects, fo doth the purity of our minds, that is, freedom from luft and paffion, difpofe us for the cleareft and moft perfect acts of reafon and underftanding.

Now Religion doth purify our minds and refine our fpirits by quenching the fire of luft and fuppreffing the fumes and vapours of it, and by fcattering the clouds and mifts of paffion. And the more any man's foul is cleanfed from the filth and dregs of fenfual lufts the more nimble and expedite it will be in its operations. The more any man conquers his paffions, the more calm and fedate his fpirit is, and the greater equality he maintains in his temper, his apprehenfions of things will be the more clear and unprejudic'd, and his judgment more firm and fteddy. And this is the meaning of that faying of *Solomon*, *He that is flow to wrath is of great underftanding, but he that is hafty of fpirit exalteth folly. Ira furor brevis eft*——Anger is a fhort fit of madnefs, and he that is paffionate and furious deprives himfelf of his reafon, fpoils his underftanding, and helps to make himfelf a fool: whereas he that conquers his paffions and keeps them under, doth thereby preferve and improve his underftanding. Freedom from irregular paffions doth not only fignify that a man is wife, but really contributes to the making of him fuch.

2. Religion tends to the eafe and pleafure, the peace and tranquility of our minds; wherein happinefs chiefly confifts and which all the wifdom and Philofophy of the world did always aim at, as the utmoft felicity of this life. And that this is the natural fruit of a Religious and virtuous courfe of life, the Scripture declares to us in thefe Texts; *Light is fown for the righteous, and gladnefs for the upright in heart*; *Great peace have all they that love thy Law, and nothing fhall offend them*; *Her ways are ways of pleafantnefs, and all her paths are peace*; *The fruit of righteoufnefs is peace, and the effect of righteoufnefs quietnefs and affurance for ever*; The plain fenfe of which Texts is, that pleafure and peace do naturally refult from a holy and good life. When a man hath once engag'd himfelf in a Religious courfe, and is habituated to piety and holinefs, all the exercifes of Religion and devotion, all acts of goodnefs and virtue are delightful to him. To honour and worfhip God, to pray to him and to praife him, to ftudy his will, to meditate upon him and to love him, all thefe bring great pleafure and peace along with them. What greater contentment and fatisfaction can there be to the mind of man, when it is once purifi'd and refin'd from the dregs of fenfual pleafures and delights, and rais'd to its true height and pitch, than to con-

Pfal. 97. 11. Pfal. 119. 165. Prov. 3. 17. Ifa. 32. 17.

template and admire the infinite excellencies and perfections of God, to adore his greatness and to love his goodness? How can the thoughts of God be troublesome to any one who lives soberly and righteously and godly in the world? No man that loves goodness and righteousness hath any reason to be afraid of God, or to be disquieted with the thoughts of him. There is nothing in God that is terrible to a good man, but all the apprehensions which we naturally have of him speak comfort and promise happiness to such a one. The consideration of his attributes is so far from being a trouble to him that it is his recreation and delight. It is for wicked men to dread God and to endeavour to banish the thoughts of him out of their minds; but a holy and virtuous man may have quiet and undisturb'd thoughts even of the justice of God, because the terror of it doth not concern him.

Now Religion doth contribute to the peace and quiet of our minds these two ways. *First*, By allaying those passions which are apt to ruffle and discompose our spirits. Malice and hatred, wrath and revenge are very fretting and vexatious and apt to make our minds sore and uneasy, but he that can moderate these affections will find a strange ease and pleasure in his own spirit. *Secondly*, by freeing us from the anxieties of guilt, and the fears of divine wrath and displeasure; than which nothing is more stinging and tormenting and renders the life of man more miserable and unquiet. And what a spring of peace and joy must it needs be to apprehend upon good grounds that God is reconcil'd to us and become our friend; that all our sins are perfectly forgiven and shall never more be remembred against us! What unexpressible comfort does overflow the pious and devout soul from the remembrance of a holy and well-spent life and a conscience of its own innocency and integrity! And nothing but the practice of Religion and Virtue can give this ease and satisfaction to the mind of man. For there is a certain kind of temper and disposition which is necessary to the pleasure and quiet of our minds, and consequently to our happiness; and that is holiness and goodness, which as it is the perfection so is it likewise the happiness of the Divine nature: And on the contrary, the chief part of the misery of wicked men, and of those accursed spirits the Devils is this, that they are of a disposition contrary to God; they are envious and malicious and cruel, and of such a temper as is naturally a torment and disquiet to it self. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil disposition of mens minds; and till this be cur'd, which can only be done by Religion, it is as impossible for a man to be happy, that is, pleas'd and contented within himself, as it is for a sick man to be at ease. Because such a man hath that within him which torments him, and he cannot be at ease till that be remov'd. The mans spirit is out of order and off the hinges, and till that be put into its right frame he will be perpetually disquieted and can find no rest within himself. The Isa. 57. 20, 21. *Prophet* very fitly describes to us the unquiet condition of wicked men, *The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace (saith my God) to the wicked.* So long as sin and corruption abound in our hearts they will be restlesly working, like wine which will be in a perpetual motion and agitation till it have purg'd it self of its dregs and foulness.

Secondly, Religion does likewise tend to the happiness of the outward man. Now the blessings of this kind are such as either respect our *health*, or *estate*, or *reputation*, or relations; and in respect of all these Religion is highly advantageous to us.

1. As to our health, a Religious and virtuous life doth eminently conduce to that, and to long life as a consequent of it. And in this sense I understand

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these following Texts; *My Son forget not my Law, but let thy heart keep my* Prov. 3.
Commandments; for length of days, and long life, shall they add to thee; and 1, 2.
v. 7, and 8. *Fear the Lord and depart from evil, it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones*; and v. 16. among the temporal advantages of wisdom or Religion this is mention'd as the first and principal, *length of days is in her right hand*; and v. 18. *she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her*; and again, *Whoso findeth me, findeth life, but he that sinneth against me wrong-* Prov. 8.
eth his own soul; (that is, is injurious to his own life) *all they that hate me love* 35, 36.
death; all which is undoubtedly true in a spiritual sense, but is certainly meant by *Solomon* in the natural sense. And these promises, of the blessings of health and long life to good men are not only declaratory of the good pleasure and intention of God towards them, but likewise of the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion doth oblige men to the practice of those virtues which do in their own nature conduce to the preservation of our health, and the lengthening of our days; such as temperance and chastity and moderation of our passions. And the contrary vices to these do apparently tend to the impairing of mens health and the shortning of their days. How many have wasted and consum'd their bodies by lust, and brought grievous pains and mortal diseases upon themselves! See how the wise man describes the sad consequences of this sin, *He goes as an Ox to the slaughter,* Prov. 7.
till a dart strike through his Liver; as a Bird hasteneth to the snare, and know- 22, 23.
eth not that it is for his life; and v. 25, 26, 27. *Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths; for she hath cast down many wounded; yea many strong men have been slain by her; her house is the way to Hell* (that is, to the grave) *going down to the chambers of death.* How many have been ruin'd by intemperance and excess, and most unnaturally have perverted those blessings which God hath given for the support of nature to the overthrow and destruction of it? How often hath mens malice and envy and discontent against others terminated in a cruel revenge upon themselves? How many by the wild fury and extravagancy of their own passions, have put their bodies into a combustion, and fir'd their spirits; and by stirring up their rage and choler against others have arm'd that fierce humour against themselves?

2. As to our estates, Religion is likewise a mighty advantage to men in that respect. Not only in regard of God's more especial providence and peculiar blessing which usually attends good men in their undertakings and crowns them with good success, but also from the nature of the thing. And this, I doubt not, is the meaning of those expressions of the *Wise man* concerning the temporal benefits and advantages of wisdom or Religion;
In her left hand are riches and honour; They that love me shall inherit substance, Pro 3 16
and I will fill their treasures. And this Religion principally does, by charging Pro 8. 21
men with truth and fidelity and justice in their dealings, which are a sure way of thriving and will hold out when all fraudulent arts and devices will fail. And this also *Solomon* observes to us; *He that walketh uprightly* Pro. 10 9
walketh surely, but he that perverteth his way shall be known; his indirect dealing will be discover'd one time or other, and then loses his reputation, and his interest sinks. Falshood and deceit only serve a present turn, and the consequence of them is pernicious; but truth and fidelity are a lasting advantage; *The righteous hath an everlasting foundation; The lip of truth is* Pro 10 25.
established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. And Religion does Prov. 12.
likewise engage men to diligence and industry in their Callings, and how 19.
much this conduces to the advancement of mens fortunes daily experience teaches, and the *Wise man* hath told us, *The diligent hand makes rich*; and Pro. 10. 4.
again,

Prov. 22. 29. again, *Seeſt thou a man diligent in buſineſs, he ſhall ſtand before Princes, he ſhall not ſtand before mean perſons.*

And where men by reaſon of the difficult circumſtances of their condition cannot arrive to any eminency of eſtate, yet Religion makes a compenſation for this by teaching men to be contented with that moderate and competent fortune which God hath given them. For the ſhorteſt way to be rich is not by enlarging our eſtates, but by contracting our deſires. What *Seneca* ſays of Philoſophy, is much more true of Religion, *præſtat opes ſapientia, quas cuicunque fecit ſupervacuas dedit*, it makes all thoſe rich to whom it makes riches ſuperfluous, and they are ſo to thoſe who are taught by Religion to be contented with ſuch a portion of them as God's Providence hath thought fit to allot to them.

3. As to our reputation. There is nothing gives a man a more firm and eſtabliſh'd reputation among wiſe and ſerious perſons (whoſe judgment is only valuable) than a prudent and ſubſtantial Piety. This doth many times command reverence and eſteem from the worſer ſort of men, and ſuch as are no great friends to Religion; and ſometimes the force of truth will extort an acknowledgment of its excellency, even from its greateſt enemies. I know very well that good men may, and often do, blemiſh the reputation of their piety by over-acting ſome things in Religion; by an indiſcreet zeal about things wherein Religion is not concerned, by an ungrateful auſterity and ſowreneſs which Religion doth not require; by little affectations, and an imprudent oſtentation of devotion; but a ſubſtantial and ſolid, a diſcreet and unaffected piety, which makes no great noiſe and ſhow, but expreſſes it ſelf in a conſtant and ſerious devotion, and is accompanied with the fruits of goodneſs and kindneſs and righteouſneſs towards men, will not only give a man a credit and value among the ſober and the virtuous, but even among the vicious and more degenerate ſort of men. Upon this account it is that the Apoſtle adviſeth Chriſtians, if they would recommend themſelves to the eſteem of God and men, earneſtly to mind the weighty and ſubſtantial parts of Religion; *Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of; for the Kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; for he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

It is true indeed, there are ſome perſons of ſo profligate a temper, and of ſuch an inveterate enmity to all goodneſs, as to ſcorn and reproach even Religion and Virtue it ſelf. But the reproach of ſuch perſons does not really wound a man's reputation. For why ſhould any man be troubled at the contumelies of thoſe whoſe judgment deſerves not to be valued, who deſpiſe goodneſs and good men out of malice and ignorance? If theſe reproaches which they caſt upon them were the cenſures of wiſe and ſober men, a man's reputation might be concern'd in them; but they are the raſh words of inconſiderate and injudicious men, the extravagant ſpeeches of thoſe who are unexperienc'd in the things they ſpeak againſt; and therefore no wiſe man will be troubled at them, or think either Religion or himſelf diſparaged by them.

4. As to our Relations. Religion alſo conduceth to the happineſs of theſe, as it derives a large and extenſive bleſſing upon all that belongs to us; the goodneſs of God being ſo diffuſive as to ſcatter his bleſſings *round about the habitations of the juſt*, and *to ſhew mercy unto thouſands of them that love him and keep his Commandments.* So *David* tells us, *Bleſſed is the man that feareth*
Pſal. 112 1, 2, 3. *the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his Commandments. His ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed. Wealth and*

riches

riches are in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever. And so *Solomon;* *A good man leaveth an inheritance to his Childrens Children*; and again, *In* Prov. 13.
the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his Children shall have a place of 22.
refuge. But the wicked derives a curse upon all that is related to him, he Prov. 14.
is said *to trouble his own house*; and again, *The wicked are overthrown and are* 26. Prov. 11.
not, but the house of the righteous shall stand. 29. Prov. 12. 7.

But setting aside the consideration of God's Providence, Religion doth likewise in its own nature tend to the welfare of those who are related to us; because it lays the strictest obligations upon men to take care of their Families and Relations, and to make the best provision both for their comfortable subsistence here in this world and their salvation in the next. And those who neglect these duties, the Scripture is so far from esteeming them Christians that it accounts them worse than Heathens and Infidels, *He that* 1 Tim. 5.
provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, is worse than an In- 8.
fidel, and hath denied the faith. This I know is spoken in respect of temporal provision, but it holds *à fortiori* as to the care of their souls.

Besides, it is many times seen that the posterity of holy and good men, especially of such as have evidenc'd their piety towards God by bounty and charity to men, have met with unusual kindness and respect from others, and have by a strange and secret disposition of Divine providence been unexpectedly car'd and provided for; and that, as they have all the reason in the world to believe, upon the account and for the sake of the piety and charity of their Parents. This *David* tells us from his own particular observation; *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous* Ps. 37. 25.
forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. And that by the *righteous* is here meant the *good and merciful man* appears from the description of him in the next words, *He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed.* And on the Ver. 26.
contrary, the posterity of the wicked do many times inherit the fruit of their fathers sins and vices; and that not only by a just judgment of God, but from the natural course and consequence of things. And in this sense that expression in *Job* is often verified, that *God lays up the iniquity of wicked men* Job 21. 19.
for their Children. And doth not experience testify that the intemperate and unjust do many times transmit their bodily infirmities and diseases to their Children, and entail a secret curse upon their estates, which does either insensibly waste and consume it, or eat out the heart and comfort of it? Thus you see how Religion in all respects conduces to the happiness of this life.

II. Religion and Virtue do likewise most certainly and directly tend to the eternal happiness and salvation of men in the other world. And this is incomparably the greatest advantage that redounds to men by being Religious, in comparison of which all temporal considerations *are less than nothing and vanity.* The worldly advantages that Religion brings to men in this present life are a sensible recommendation of Religion even to the lowest and meanest spirits: But to those who are rais'd above sense and aspire after immortality, who believe the perpetual duration of their souls and the resurrection of their bodies; to those who are throughly convinc'd of the inconsiderableness of this short dying life and of all the concernments of it, in comparison of that eternal state which remains for us in another life; to these, I say, the consideration of a future happiness and of those unspeakable and everlasting rewards which shall then be given to holiness and virtue, is certainly the most powerful motive and the most likely to prevail upon them. For those who are persuaded that they shall continue for ever cannot chuse but aspire after a happiness commensurate to their duration, nor can any

thing that is conſcious to its ſelf of its own immortality be ſatisfied and contented with any thing leſs than the hopes of an endleſs felicity. And this hope Religion alone gives men, and the Chriſtian Religion only can ſettle men in a firm and unſhaken aſſurance of it. But becauſe all men who have entertain'd any Religion have conſented to theſe principles, of the *immortality of the ſoul* and the *recompences of another world*, and have always promis'd to themſelves ſome rewards of piety and virtue after this life; and becauſe I did more particularly deſign from this *Text* to ſpeak of the temporal benefits and advantages which redound to men from Religion, therefore I ſhall content my ſelf to ſhew very briefly how a religious and virtuous life doth conduce to our future happineſs. And that upon theſe two accounts; from the promiſe of God, and from the nature of the thing.

1 Tim. 4. 8. 1. From the promiſe of God. *Godlineſs* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *hath the promiſe of the life that is to come.* God hath all along in the Scripture ſuſpended the promiſe of eternal life upon this condition. He hath peremptorily declar'd that without obedience and holineſs of life no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord. And this very thing, that it is the conſtitution and appointment of God, might be argument enough to us (if there were no other) to convince us of the neceſſity of obeying the Laws of God in order to our happineſs, and to perſuade us thereunto. For eternal life is the gift of God, and he may do what he will with his own. He is maſter of his own favours and may diſpenſe them upon what terms and conditions he pleaſes. But it is no hard condition that he hath impoſed upon us. If Religion brought no advantages to us in this world, yet the happineſs of Heaven is ſo great as will abundantly recompence all our pains and endeavours; there is temptation enough in the reward to engage any man in the work. Had God thought fit to have impos'd the moſt grievous and difficult things upon us, ought we not to have ſubmitted to them and to have undertaken them with cheerfulneſs upon ſuch great and glorious encouragements? As *Naaman*'s ſervants ſaid to him in another caſe, *Had he bid thee do ſome great thing wouldeſt thou not have done it?* So if God had ſaid that without poverty and actual martyrdom *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, would not any man that believes Heaven and hell and underſtands what theſe words ſignify and what it is to eſcape extreme and eternal miſery, and to enjoy unſpeakable and endleſs glory, have been willing to accept theſe conditions? *How much more, when he hath only ſaid, Waſh and be clean*; and *Let every man that hath this hope in Him, purify himſelf as he is pure?* But God hath not dealt thus with us, nor is the impoſing of this condition of eternal life a mere arbitrary conſtitution, therefore I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

2*dly*, That a Religious and Holy life doth from the very nature and reaſon of the thing conduce to our future happineſs, by way of neceſſary diſpoſition and preparation of us for it. We cannot be otherwiſe happy but by our conformity to God, without this we cannot poſſibly love him nor find any pleaſure or happineſs in communion with him. For we cannot love a nature contrary to our own, nor delight to converſe with it. Therefore Religion, in order to the fitting of us for the happineſs of the next life, does deſign to mortify our luſts and paſſions, and to reſtrain us from the inordinate love of the groſs and ſenſual delights of this world; to call off our minds from theſe inferior things, and to raiſe them to higher and more ſpiritual objects, that we may be diſpoſed for the happineſs of the other world, and taught to reliſh the delights of it; whereas ſhould we ſet our hearts only upon theſe things, and be able to taſte no pleaſure in any thing but what is ſenſual and earthly, we muſt needs be extremely miſera-

ble when we come into the other world, becauſe we ſhould meet with nothing to entertain our ſelves withal, no employment ſuitable to our diſpoſition, no pleaſure that would agree with our deprav'd appetites and vicious inclinations. All that Heaven and happineſs ſignifies is unſuitable to a wicked man, and therefore could be no felicity to him. But this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more fully to in my laſt Diſcourſe.

From all that hath been ſaid, the reaſonableneſs of Religion clearly appears which tends ſo directly to the happineſs of men, and is upon all accounts calculated for our benefit. Let but all things be truly conſidered and caſt up and it will be found that there is no advantage to any man from an irreligious and vicious courſe of Life. I challenge any one to inſtance in any real benefit that ever came to him this way. Let the ſinner declare what he hath found by experience. Hath lewdneſs and intemperance been more for his health than if he had liv'd chaſtly and ſoberly? Hath falſhood and injuſtice prov'd at the long run more for the advancement and ſecurity of his eſtate, than truth and honeſty would have done? Hath any vice that he hath lived in made him more true friends, and gain'd him a better reputation in the world than the practice of holineſs and virtue would have done? Hath he found *that* peace and ſatisfaction of mind in an evil courſe, and *that* quiet enjoyment of himſelf, and comfortable aſſurance of God's favour, and good hopes of his future condition, which a Religious and virtuous life would have given him? Nay on the contrary, have not ſome of his vices weaken'd his body and broken his Health, have not others diſſipated his eſtate, and reduc'd him to want? What notorious vice is there that doth not blemiſh a man's reputation, and make him either hated or deſpis'd, and that not only by the wiſe and the virtuous but even by the generality of men? But was ever any wicked man free from the ſtings of a guilty conſcience and the torment of a reſtleſs and uneaſy mind, from the ſecret dread of Divine diſpleaſure, and of the vengeance of another world? Let the ſinner freely ſpeak the very inward ſenſe of his ſoul in this matter, and ſpare not; and I doubt not, if he will deal clearly and impartially, but that he will acknowledge all this to be true, and is able to confirm it from his own ſad experience. For this is the natural fruit of ſin and the preſent revenge which it takes upon ſinners, beſides that fearful puniſhment which ſhall be inflicted on them in another life.

What reaſon then can any man pretend againſt Religion, when it is ſo apparently for the benefit not only of human ſociety but of every particular perſon, when there is no real intereſt of this world but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and purſued to as great advantage, nay uſually to far greater, by a man that *lives ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in the world*, than by any one that leads the contrary courſe of life? Let no man then ſay, with thoſe prophane perſons whom the *Prophet* ſpeaks of, *It is in vain to ſerve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have kept his Commandments?* Mal. 3.14
God has not been ſo hard a maſter to us that we have reaſon thus to complain of him. He hath given us no Laws but what are for our good, nay ſo gracious hath he been to us as to link together our duty and our intereſt, and to make thoſe very things the inſtances of our obedience which are the natural means and cauſes of our happineſs. The Devil was ſo far in the right, when he charg'd *Job* that he did not *ſerve God for nought.* 'Tis he himſelf that is the hard maſter and makes men ſerve him for nought, who rewards his drudges and ſlaves with nothing but ſhame and ſorrow and miſery. But God requires no man's ſervice upon hard and unreaſonable terms. The

greatest part of our work is a present reward to it self, and for whatever else we do or suffer for him, he offers us abundant consideration. And if men did but truly and wisely love themselves they would upon this very ground if there were no other, become Religious. For when all is done there is no man can serve his own interest better than by serving God. Religion conduceth both to our present and future happiness, and when the Gospel chargeth us with piety towards God, and justice and charity towards men, and temperance and chastity in reference to our selves, the true interpretation of these Laws is this, God requires of men in order to their eternal happiness that they should do those things which tend to their temporal welfare, that is, in plainer words, he promises to make us happy for ever upon condition that we will but do that which is best for our selves in this World. To conclude, Religion is founded in the interest of men rightly apprehended. So that if *the God of this world* and the lusts of men did not *blind their eyes*, so as to render them unfit to discern their true interest, it would be impossible, so long as men love themselves and desire their own happiness to keep them from being religious; for they could not but conclude that to be their interst, and being so convinc'd they would resolve to pursue it and stick to it.

SERMON

SERMON V.

The Excellency of the Christian Religion.

PHIL. III. 8.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

IN the beginning of this Chapter the *Apostle* makes a comparison between the *Jewish* and the Christian Religion, and shews the Christian to be in truth and substance what the *Jewish* was only in type and shadow, v. 3. *We are the Circumcision which worship God in the spirit.* And then he enumerates the several priviledges he was partaker of by virtue of his being born in the *Jewish* Church, v. 4, 5, 6. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel,* &c. And yet he tells us he was contented to forgo all these advantages for Christ and the Christian Religion, v. 7. *But what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ.* And not only these, but if there were any thing else that men value in this world he was willing to hazard that also upon the same account, v. 8. *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*

In which words the Apostle declares the high esteem he had for the Christian Religion which he calls the *the knowledge of Christ Jesus* his *Lord*; the excellency whereof appear'd so great to him that he valued nothing in comparison of the advantages which he had by the knowledge of it.

My design at this time from this Text is to represent the excellency of this knowledge of the Christian Religion above that of any other Religion or Institution in the world. And here I shall not consider the external evidence which we have of the truth of Christianity and of the Divinity of its doctrine, in which respect it hath incomparably the advantage of any other Religion: but only the internal excellency of the Doctrine it self, abstracting from the Divine authority of it: And that in these four respects:

First, As it does more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, which is the great foundation of all Religion.

Secondly, As it gives us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives.

Thirdly, As it propounds to us more powerful Arguments to persuade men to the obedience of this Law.

Fourthly, As it furnishes us with better motives and considerations to patience and contentedness under the evils and afflictions of this life. Now these are the greatest advantages that any Religion can have; To give men right apprehensions of God, a perfect rule of good life, and efficacious arguments to persuade men to be good, and patiently to bear the evils and sufferings of this life. And these shall be the heads of my following discourse.

 I. The

I. The Christian Religion doth more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, than any Religion ever did. And to have right apprehensions of God is the great foundation of all Religion. For according as mens notions of God are such will their Religion be. If men have gross and false conceptions of God their Religion will be absurd and superstitious. If men fancy God to be an ill-natur'd Being arm'd with infinite power, one that delights in the misery and ruin of his Creatures and is ready to take all advantages against them, they may fear him but they will hate him; and they will be apt to be such towards one another as they fancy God to be towards them, for all Religion doth naturally incline men to imitate him whom they worship.

Now the Christian Religion gives us a more perfect, and a more lovely character of God than any Religion ever did. It represents him to us as a pure Spirit, (which the Heathens did not generally believe) and that he is to be worshipp'd in such a manner as is most suitable to his spiritual nature, (which not only the Heathens but even the *Jews* themselves were extremely mistaken about) *God is a spirit* (says our Saviour) *and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* It is true indeed God himself did command sacrifices to the *Jews*, and all those external and troublesome observances of which their Religion did consist: But then it is to be consider'd that he did not institute this way of Worship because it was most suitable to his own nature, but because of the carnality of their hearts and the proneness of that people to Idolatry. God did not prescribe these things because they were best, but because the temper of that People would then admit of nothing better. And this the Scripture gives us several intimations of, *Thou*
Psal. 16. *desirest not sacrifice, thou delightest not in burnt-offerings*, saith *David*: And
Jer. 7. 22. elsewhere more expresly to this purpose; *I spake not unto your Fathers* (says God by the prophet *Jeremiah*) *nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice*: A sufficient intimation that God did not primarily intend to appoint this way of worship, and to impose it upon them as that which was most proper and agreeable to him, but that he condescended to it as most accommodate to their present state and inclination. And in this sense also some understand what God
Ezek. 20. says to the same people by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he *gave them statutes that were not good.*

And as the Christian Religion gives a more perfect, so a more amiable and lovely character of the Divine nature. No Religion that ever was in the world does so fully represent the goodness of God and his tender love to mankind, which is the best and most powerful argument to the love of God. The Heathens did generally dread God, and looked upon him as fierce and cruel and revengeful; and therefore they endeavoured to appease him by the horrid and barbarous sacrifices of men, and of their own Children. And all along in the *Old Testament* God is generally represented as very strict and severe. But there are no where so plain and full declarations of his mercy and love to the sons of men as are made in the *Gospel*. In the *Old Testament* God is usually stiled *the Lord of Hosts, the great and the terrible God:* But in the *New Testament* he is represented to us by milder titles, *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies, and the God of all consolations; the God of all patience, the God of love and peace*; nay he is said to be *love* it self and to *dwell in love*. And this difference between the stile of the *Old* and *New Testament* is so remarkable, that one of the greatest *Sects* in the Primitive Church (I mean that of the *Gnosticks*) did upon this very ground found their *heresy* of two Gods; the *one* evil and fierce and

cruel,

cruel, whom they call'd the God of the *Old Testament*; the *other* good and kind and merciful, whom they call'd the God of the *New*. So great a difference is there between the representations which are made of God in the Books of the *Jewish* and the Christian Religion, as to give at least some colour and pretence for an imagination of two Gods.

II. Christian Religion hath given us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives. It hath made our duty more plain and certain in many instances, than either the Philosophy of the *Heathen*, or the precepts of *Moses* had done. It commands universal love and kindness and good will among men, a readiness to forgive our greatest enemies, *to do good to them that hate us, to bless them that curse us*, and *to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us*. And does inculcate these precepts more vehemently, and forbid malice and hatred and revenge and contention more strictly and peremptorily than any Religion ever did before: as will appear to any one that does but attentively read our *Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount*.

And as Christianity hath given us a more *certain* so likewise a more *perfect* Law for the government of our lives. All the precepts of it are reasonable and wise, requiring such duties of us as are suitable to the light of nature and do approve themselves to the best reason of mankind, such as have their foundation in the nature of God, and are an imitation of the Divine excellencies, such as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to raise the minds of men to the highest pitch of goodness and virtue. The Laws of our Religion are such as are generally useful and beneficial to the world, as do tend to the outward peace and the health, to the inward comfort and contentment, and to the universal happiness of mankind. They command nothing that is unnecessary and burdensome, as were the numerous rites and ceremonies of the *Jewish* Religion, but what is reasonable, and useful, and substantial: And they omit nothing that may tend to the glory of God or the welfare of men, nor do they restrain us in any thing but what is contrary either to the regular inclinations of nature or to our reason and true interest. They forbid us nothing but what is base and unworthy, to serve our humours and passions, to reproach our understandings and to make our selves fools and beasts; in a word, nothing but what tends either to our private harm and prejudice, or to publick disorder and confusion.

And that this is the tenor of the Laws of the Gospel will appear to any one from our *Saviour's* Sermons and Discourses: particularly that upon the Mount; wherein he charges his Disciples and followers to be humble, and meek, and righteous, and merciful, and pure, and peaceable, and patient under sufferings and persecutions, and good and kind to all even to those that are evil and injurious to us, and to endeavour to excel in all goodness and virtue. This will appear likewise from the Writings of the holy Apostles; I will instance but in some few passages in them. St. *Paul* represents to us the design of the Christian doctrine in a very few words, but of admirable sense and weight; *The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appear'd to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World.* (Tit. 2. 11, 12.) The same Apostle makes this the main and fundamental condition of the Covenant of the Gospel on our part, *Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* (2 Tim. 2. 19.) St. *James* describes the Christian doctrine (which he calls *the wisdom that is from above*) by these characters, *It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality,* (James 3. 17.)

2 Pet. 1. 3, 4. *partiality, and without hypocrisy.* St. *Peter* calls the Gospel, *the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby* (saith he) *are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of a divine nature having escap'd the corruption that is in the world through lust;*
V. 5, 6, 7 and upon this consideration he exhorts them *to give all diligence to add to their faith* the several virtues of a good life, without which he tells them *they are barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* I will conclude with that full and comprehensive passage of St. *Paul* to the
Phil. 4, 8. *Philippians, Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,* (σεμνὰ, whatsoever things are of venerable esteem) *whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure* (or chaste) *whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.*

But the perfection and the reasonableness of the Laws of Christianity will most plainly appear by taking a brief survey of them. And they may all be referr'd to these two general heads. They are either such as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to make men singly and personally good, or such as tend to the peace and happiness of humane Society.

First, Such as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to make men good singly and personally consider'd. And the precepts of this kind may be distributed likewise into two sorts, such as enjoin Piety towards God, or such as require the good order and government of our selves in respect of the enjoyments and pleasures of this life.

1. Such as enjoyn Piety towards God. All the duties of Christian Religion which respect God are no other but what natural light prompts men to, excepting the two Sacraments (which are of great use and significancy in the Christian Religion) and praying to God in the name and by the mediation of Jesus Christ. For the sum of natural Religion as it refers more immediately to God is this, That we should inwardly reverence and love God, and that we should express our inward reverence and love to him by external worship and adoration, and by our readiness to receive and obey all the revelations of his will: And that we should testify our dependance upon him, and our confidence of his goodness, by constant prayers and supplications to him for mercy and help for our selves and others; And that we should acknowledge our obligations to him for the many favours and benefits which every day and every minute we receive from him, by continual praises and thanksgivings: And that on the contrary we should not entertain any unworthy thoughts of God, nor give that honour and reverence which is due to him, to any other; that we should not worship him in any manner that is either unsuitable to the excellency and perfection of his nature, or contrary to his reveal'd will; that we should carefully avoid the prophane and irreverent use of his Name by cursing, or customary swearing, and take heed of the neglect or contempt of his Worship or any thing belonging to it. This is the sum of the first part of natural Religion, and these are the general heads of those duties which every man's reason tells him he ows to God: And these are the very things which the Christian Religon does expresly require of us, as might be evidenc'd from particular Texts in the *New Testament.* So that there is nothing in this part of Christianity but what agrees well with the reason of mankind.

2. Such precepts as require the good order and government of our selves in respect of the pleasures and enjoyments of this life. Christian Religion commands whatsoever things are pure and chaste, all manner of sobriety and temperance and moderation in reference to our appetites and passions;

and

and forbids whatever is unnatural, and unreasonable, and unhealthful in the use of pleasures and of any of God's creatures. Hither belong all those Texts which require of us that we should *not walk after the flesh but after the spirit*, that we should *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, that we should *be holy in all manner of conversation*. St. *John* distributes the lusts and irregular appetites of men into three kinds, voluptuousness, covetousness, and ambition, answerable to the three sorts of tempting objects that are in the world, pleasures, riches and honours. *All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, &c. And Christianity doth strictly forbid all these, *Take heed and beware of Covetousness* (says our Saviour, and he adds this excellent reason) *for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*. It forbids pride and ambition and vain-glory and commands humility and modesty and condescention to others; *Learn of me* (says our Saviour) *for I am meek and lowly in spirit*; *Mind not high things, but condescend to them that are of low degree*; *Let nothing be done through vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* And in reference to sensual pleasures it forbids all irregularity and excess, and strictly enjoyns purity and temperance; cautioning us *to take heed lest we be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*; charging us *to walk decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness*; *to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.* Now all these precepts do not only tend to beget in us such virtues and dispositions as are reasonable and suitable to our nature and every way for our temporal convenience and advantage, but such as do likewise exceedingly dispose us to piety and religion by purifying our souls from the dross and filth of sensual delights. For covetousnes debaseth a man's spirit, and sinks it into the earth; intemperance and lust cloud a man's understanding, and indispose it for the contemplation of things spiritual and divine. Thus you see how the Precepts of Christianity do tend to the perfection of humane nature, considering men singly and personally.

Rom. 8. 1. 2 Cor. 7. 1. 1 Pet. 1. 15. 1 John 2. 16. Luke 12. 15. Mat. 11. 29. Rom. 12. 16. Phil. 2. 3. Luke 21. 36. Rom. 13. 13. 1 Pet. 11.

Secondly, The other sort of Precepts are such as tend to the peace and happiness of humane Society. And the reason of mankind can devise nothing more proper to this end than the Laws of Christianity are. For they command all those virtues which are apt to sweeten the spirits and allay the passions and animosities of men one towards another. They require us *to love our neighbour* (that is, every man in the world, even our greatest enemies) *as our selves*. And for this end among others was the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, the Feast of love instituted: that by commemorating the love of our dying Saviour, who laid down his life for his enemies, we might be put in mind how we ought to love one another.

And by this Law of loving all men even our enemies, Christian Religion discovers it self not only to be the most innocent and harmless, but the most generous and best-natur'd Institution that ever was in the world. For in pursuance of this general precept it commands us, *to do good to all men*; *if it be possible, and as much as in us lies to live peaceably with all men*; to be *kind one to another*, ready to gratify and oblige men; to be *tender-hearted* and compassionate towards those that are in want or misery, and ready to supply and relieve them; to sympathize with one another in our joys and sorrows, *to mourn with those that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice*; *to bear one another's burdens, and to forbear one another in love*; to be easily reconcil'd to them that have offended us, and to be ready to *forgive from our hearts* the greatest injuries that can be done to us, and that without bounds and limits *even to seventy seven times*; as our Saviour expresseth it.

The Laws of Christianity do likewise secure both the private interests of men and the publick peace, by confirming and enforcing all the dictates of nature concerning Justice and Equity, and our doing to others as we would have them to do to us; and by commanding obedience to humane Laws which decide mens rights and submission to government under pain of Damnation: And by forbidding whatever is contrary to these, violence and oppression, defrauding and over-reaching one another, perfidiousness and treachery, breach of trusts, oaths or promises, undutifulness to superiors, sedition and rebellion against Magistracy and Authority: And if there be any thing else that is apt to disturb the peace of the world and to alienate the affections of men from one another, as sowreness of disposition, and rudeness of behaviour, censoriousness and sinister interpretation of things, all cross and distasteful humours, and whatever else may render the conversation of men grievous and uneasy to one another: All these are either expresly, or by clear consequence and deduction forbidden in the New Testament.

And now what could any Religion do more towards the reforming of the dispositions and manners of men? What Laws can be devis'd more proper and effectual to advance the nature of man to its highest perfection, to procure the tranquility of mens minds and the peace and happiness of the world, than these precepts of Christianity are? Several of which (as those of *loving our enemies*, of *not revenging injuries*, of *rendring good for evil*, &c.) tho they have been esteem'd reasonable by some of the wisest among the Heathen, yet by reason of the degeneracy of the world, and of the obscurity and uncertainty of humane reason, they never obtain'd to have the estimation and force of natural Laws. So that we owe to Christianity the discovery of the most certain and perfect Rule of life that ever the world was acquainted withal.

III. Christian Religion propounds the most powerful arguments to persuade men to the obedience of these Laws. The Gospel offers such considerations to us, as are fit to work very forcibly upon two of the most swaying and governing passions in the mind of man, our hopes and our fears. To encourage our hopes it gives us the highest assurance of the greatest and most lasting happiness, in case of obedience; and to awaken our fear it threatens sinners with the most dreadful and durable torments, in case of disobedience. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality*, it promiseth *eternal life: But unto them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness*, it threatens *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*. (Rom. 2. 7, 8.) And this is that which makes the doctrine of the Gospel so powerful an instrument for the reforming of the world, that it proposes to men such glorious rewards and such terrible punishments as no Religion ever did; and to make the consideration of them more effectual, it gives us far greater assurance of the reality, and certainty of these things than ever the world had before. This account the *Apostle* gives us of the success and efficacy of the Gospel upon the minds of men, and for this reason he calls it *the power of God unto salvation*, because therein *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* (Rom. 1. 16, 18.) Before the revelation of the Gospel the wickedness and impenitency of the Heathen world was a much more excusable thing, because they were in a great measure ignorant of the rewards of another life, and had generally but very uncertain and obscure apprehensions of those things which urge men most powerfully to forsake their sins, and are the most prevalent ar-

guments to a good life. So St. *Paul* tells the *Athenians* the most knowing among the Heathen, *The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Acts 17. 30, 31. The Resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead hath given the world that full assurance of another life after this and of a future Judgment which it never had before, for *He* whom God rais'd from the dead did declare and testify that *it was he who was ordain'd of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.* Acts 10. 42. And the firm belief of a future Judgment, which shall *render to every man according to his deeds*, if it be well consider'd, is to a reasonable nature the most forcible motive of all other to a good life; because it is taken from the consideration of the greatest and most lasting happiness and misery that human nature is capable of. So that the Laws of Christianity have the firmest sanction of any Laws in the world to secure the obedience and observance of them: For what can restrain men from sin if the terrors of the Lord and the evident danger of eternal destruction will not? What encouragement can be given to goodness beyond the hopes of Heaven and the assurance of an endless felicity?

IV. The Christian Religion furnisheth us with the best motives and considerations to patience and contentedness under the evils and afflictions of this life. This was one great design of Philosophy, to support men under the evils and calamities which this life is incident to, and to fortify their spirits against sufferings. And to this end the wisest among the Heathens rack'd their wits and cast about every way, they advanc'd all sorts of principles and manag'd every little argument and consideration to the utmost advantage. And yet after all these attempts they have not been able to give any considerable comfort and ease to the mind of man under any of the great evils and pressures of this life. *The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and the covering narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it.* All the wise sayings and advices which Philosophers could muster up to this purpose have prov'd ineffectual to the common people and the generality of mankind, and have help'd only to support some few stout and obstinate minds, which without the assistance of Philosophy would have held up pretty well of themselves.

Some of the Philosophers have run so far back for arguments of comfort against pain as to call every thing into question, and to *doubt* whether there were any such thing as sense or pain. And yet for all that when any great evil has been upon them, they would *certainly* sigh and groan as pitifully and cry out as loud as other men.

Others have sought to ease themselves of all the evil of affliction by disputing subtilly against it, and pertinaciously maintaining that afflictions are no real evils but only in opinion and imagination, and therefore a wise man ought not to be troubled at them. But he must be a very wise man that can forbear being troubled at things that are very troublesome. And yet thus *Possidonius* (as *Tully* tells us) distinguish'd, he could not deny pain to be *very troublesome*, but for all that he was resolv'd *never to acknowledge it to be an evil.* But sure it is a very slender comfort that relies upon this nice distinction between things being *troublesome* and being *evils*, when all the evil of affliction lies in the trouble it creates to us. But when the best that can be is made of this argument, it is good for nothing but to be thrown away as a stupid Paradox and against the common sense of mankind.

Others have endeavoured to delude their trouble by a graver way of reasoning, that these things are fatal and necessary and therefore no body ought to be troubled at them, it being in vain to be troubled at that which we cannot help. And yet perhaps it might as reasonably be said on the other side that this very consideration, *that a thing cannot be help'd*, is one of the justest causes of trouble to a wise man. For it were some kind of comfort if these evils were to be avoided, because then we might be careful to prevent them another time; but if they be necessary then my trouble is as fatal as the calamity that occasions it; and though I know it in vain to be troubled for that which I cannot help yet I cannot chuse but be afflicted. It was a smart reply that *Augustus* made to one that ministred this comfort to him of the fatality of things, *Hoc ipsum est* (says he) *quod me male habet*, this was so far from giving any ease to his mind that *this was the very thing that troubled him.*

Others have try'd to divert and entertain the troubles of other men by pretty and plausible *sayings*, such as this, *That if evils are long they are but light, if sharp but short*, and a hundred such like. Now I am apt to imagine that it is but a very small comfort that a plain and ordinary man, lying under a sharp fit of the Stone for a week together, receives from this fine Sentence. For what pleasure soever men that are at ease and leisure may take in being the Authors of witty sayings, I doubt it is but poor consolation that a man under great and stinging afflictions finds from them.

The best moral argument to patience, in my opinion, is the advantage of patience it self. To bear evils as quietly as we can is the way to make them lighter and easier. But to toss and fling and to be restless is good for nothing but to fret and enrage our pain, to gall our sores and to make the burthen that is upon us sit more uneasy. But this is properly no consideration of comfort, but an art of managing our selves under afflictions so as not to make them more grievous than indeed they are.

But now the arguments which Christianity propounds to us are such as are a just and reasonable encouragement to men to bear sufferings patiently. Our Religion sets before us not the example of a stupid *Stoick*, who had by obstinate principles harden'd himself against all sense of pain beyond the common measures of humanity, but an example that lies level to all mankind, of a man like our selves, that had a tender sense of the least suffering
Heb.12.2. and yet patiently endur'd the greatest; of *Jesus the Author and finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

God thought it expedient that the first Christians should by great hardships and persecutions be train'd up for glory, and to animate and encourage them
Heb.2.10. hereto the *Captain of our salvation was crown'd by sufferings.* Much more should the consideration of this pattern arm us with patience against the common and ordinary calamities of this life, especially if we consider his example with this advantage, that tho his sufferings were wholly undeserv'd, and not for himself but for us, yet he bore them patiently.

But the main consideration of all is, the glory which shall follow our sufferings as the reward of *them*, if they be for God and his cause; and if upon any other innocent account, as reward of our patience. *Our light af-*
2 Cor. 4. 17. *fliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* Christian Religion hath secur'd us that we shall be infinite gainers by our sufferings. And who would not be content to suffer upon terms of such advantage? *to pass through many tribulations into the Kingdom of God*, and to endure a short affliction for an endless happiness? The assurance

surance of a future blessedness is a cordial that will revive our spirits more in the day of adversity, than all the wise sayings and considerations of Philosophy.

These are the arguments which Christianity propounds to us, and they are firm and sound at the bottom; they have strength and substance in them, and are apt to work upon humane nature, and the most ordinary understanding is capable of the force of them. In the strength and virtue of this great example, and in contemplation of this glorious reward, with what resolution and chearfulness, with what courage and patience did vast numbers of all sorts of people in the first Ages of Christianity, not only men but women, not only those of greater spirit and more generous education but those of the poorest and lowest condition, not only the learned and the wise but the ignorant and illiterate, encounter all the rage and malice of the world and embrace torments and death? Had the precepts and counsels of Philosophy ever any such effect upon the minds of men? I will conclude this with a passage in the life of *Lipsius*, who was a great studier and admirer of the *Stoical* Philosophy. When he lay upon his death-bed, and one of his friends who came to visit him told him that he needed not use arguments to perswade him to patience under his pains, the Philosophy which he had studied so much would furnish him with motives enough to that purpose, he answers him with this ejaculation, *Domine Jesu, da mihi patientiam Christianam, Lord Jesus, give me Christian patience.* No patience like to that which the considerations of Christianity are apt to work in us.

And now I have as briefly and plainly as I could endeavour'd to represent to you the excellency of the Christian Religion, both in respect of the clear discoveries which it makes to us of the nature of God which is the great foundation of all Religion, and likewise in respect of the perfection of its Laws and the power of its arguments to perswade men both to obey and suffer the will of God. By which you may see, what the proper tendency and design of this Religion is, and what the Laws and precepts of it would make men if they would truly observe them and live according to them, substantially Religious towards God, chast and temperate, patient and contented in reference to themselves and the dispensations of God's providence towards them, just and honest, kind and peaceable and good-natur'd towards all men. In a word, the Gospel describes God to us in all respects such a one as we would wish him to be, gives us such Laws as every man that understands himself would chuse to live by, propounds such arguments to persuade to the obedience of these Laws as no man that wisely loves himself and hath any tenderness for his own interest and happiness either in this world or the other, can refuse to be mov'd withal.

And now methinks I may with some confidence challenge any Religion in the world to shew such a compleat body and collection of holy and reasonable Laws establish'd upon such promises and threatnings as the Gospel contains. And if any man can produce a Religion that can reasonably pretend to an equal or a greater confirmation than the Gospel hath, a Religion the precepts and promises and threatnings whereof are calculated to make men wiser and better, more temperate and more chaste, more meek and more patient, more kind and more just, than the laws and motives of Christianity are apt to make men; if any man can produce such a Religion, I am ready to be of it. Let but any man shew me any Book in the world, the doctrines whereof have the seal of such miracles as the doctrine of the Scriptures hath; a Book which contains the heads of our duty so perfectly, and

 without

without the mixture of any thing that is unreasonable, or vicious, or any ways unworthy of God; that commands us every thing in reason necessary to be done, and abridgeth us of no lawful pleasure without offering us abundant recompence for our present self-denial; a Book the rules whereof, if they were practis'd, would make men more pious and devout, more holy and sober, more just and fair in their dealings, better friends and better neighbours, better magistrates and better subjects and better in all relations, and which does offer to the understanding of men more powerful arguments to persuade them to be all this; let any man, I say, shew me such a Book, and I will lay aside the Scripture and preach out of *that.*

And do we not all profess to be of this excellent Religion, and to study and believe this holy Book of the Scriptures? But alas! who will believe that we do so, that shall look upon the actions and consider the lives of the greatest part of Christians? How grosly and openly do many of us contradict the plain precepts of the Gospel, by our ungodliness and worldly lusts, by living intemperately or unjustly, or prophanely in this present world? As if *the grace of God which brings salvation*, had never *appear'd* to us, as if we had never heard of Heaven or Hell, or believ'd not one word that the Scripture says concerning them, as if we were in no expectation *of the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, whom God hath *appointed to judge the world in righteousness*, and who will bestow mighty rewards upon those who faithfully serve him, but will come *in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Let us not then deceive our selves by pretending to this *excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord*, if we do not frame our lives according to it. For tho we *know these things* never so well, yet we are not *happy* unless *we do them*: Nay, we are but the more miserable for knowing them if we do them not; Therefore it concerns every one of us to consider seriously what we believe; and whether our belief of the Christian Religion have its due effect upon our lives. If not, all the Precepts and Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel will rise up in judgment against us, and the Articles of our Faith will be so many Articles of Accusation, and the great weight of our charge will be this that we did not obey that Gospel which we profess'd to believe, that we made confession of the Christian Faith but liv'd like Heathens. Not to believe the Christian Religion, after so great evidence and confirmation as God hath given to it, is very unreasonable; but to believe it to be true, and yet to live as if it were false, is the greatest repugnancy and contradiction that can be. He that does not believe Christianity, either hath, or thinks he hath some reason for withholding his assent from it. But he that believes it, and yet lives contrary to it, knows that he hath no reason for what he does, and is convinc'd that he ought to do otherwise: And he is a miserable man indeed that does those things, for the doing of which he continually stands condemn'd by his own mind. And accordingly God will deal more severely with such persons. He will pardon a thousand defects in our understandings, if they do not proceed from gross carelesness and neglect of our selves; but the faults of our wills have no excuse, because we knew to do better and were convinc'd in our minds that we ought not to have done so.

Dost thou believe that *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, and dost thou still allow thy self *in ungodliness and worldly lusts?* Art thou convinc'd that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, and dost thou still persist in a wicked course? Art thou fully

fully persuaded that *no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous person shall have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God and Christ*, and dost thou for all that continue to practise these vices? What canst thou say (*man*) why it should not be to thee according to thy faith? If it so fall out that thou art miserable and undone for ever, thou hast no reason to be surpriz'd as if some unexpected thing had happen'd to thee. It is but with thee just as thou believed'st it would be when thou didst these things. For how could'st thou expect that God should accept of thy good belief when thou didst so notoriously contradict it by a bad life? How couldst thou look for other but that God should condemn thee for the doing of those things for which thine own Conscience did condemn thee all the while thou wast doing of them; When we come into the other world there is no consideration that will sting our consciences more cruelly than this, that we did wickedly when we knew to have done better, and chose to make our selves miserable when we understood the way to have been happy. To conclude, we Christians have certainly the best and the holiest, the wisest and most reasonable Religion in the world; but then we are in the worst condition of all mankind, if the best Religion in the world do not make us good.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

The Precepts of Christianity not grievous.

1 JOHN V. 3.

----And his commandments are not grievous.

ONE of the great prejudices which men have entertain'd against the Christian Religion is this, that it lays upon men *heavy burthens and grievous to be born*, that the Laws of it are very strict and severe, difficult to be kept and yet dangerous to be broken; That it requires us to govern and keep under our passions, and to contradict many times our strongest inclinations and desires, *to cut off our right hand* and *to pluck out our right eye*, to *love our enemies*, to *bless them that curse us*, to *do good to them that hate us*, and to *pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us*; to forgive the greatest injuries that are done to us, and to make reparation for the least that we do to others; to be contented with our condition, patient under sufferings, and ready to sacrifice our dearest interests in this world, and even our very lives, in the cause of God and Religion: All these seem to be *hard sayings* and *grievous commandments*.

For the removal of this prejudice I have chosen these words of the Apostle, which expresly tells us the contrary, that *the commandments of God are not grievous*.

And though this be a great truth if it be impartially consider'd, yet it is also a great paradox to men of corrupt minds and vicious practices, who are prejudic'd against Religion and the holy Laws of God by their interest and their lusts. This seems a strange *proposition* to those who look upon Religion at a distance and never try'd the experiment of a holy life, who measure the Laws of God not by the intrinsecal goodness and equity of them, but by the reluctancy and opposition which they find in their own hearts against them.

Upon this account it will be requisite to take some pains to satisfy the reason of men concerning this truth, and if it be possible to make it so evident that those who are unwilling to own it may yet be asham'd to deny it. And methinks I have this peculiar advantage in the argument I have now undertaken, that every reasonable man cannot chuse but wish me success in this attempt, because I undertake the proof of that which it is every man's interest that it should be true: And if I can make it out, this pretence against Religion will not only be baffled but we shall gain a new and forcible argument to persuade men over to it.

Now the easiness or difficulty of the observation of any Laws or commands depends chiefly upon these *three* things.

First, Upon the Nature of the Laws themselves and their suitableness or unsuitableness to those to whom they are given.

Secondly, Upon the ability or weakneſs of thoſe on whom theſe Laws are impos'd for the keeping of them. For eaſineſs and difficulty are relative terms and refer to ſome power, and a thing may be difficult to a weak man which yet may be eaſy to the ſame perſon when aſſiſted with a greater ſtrength.

Thirdly, Upon the encouragement that is given to the obſervation of them. For the propoſal of great rewards does very much qualify and allay the difficulty of any undertaking.

Now if I can make theſe three things evident; 1. That the Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſuitable to our nature and advantageous to our intereſt. 2. That we are not deſtitute of ſufficient power and ability for the performance of them. And 3. That we have the greateſt encouragements to this purpoſe: Then have we all imaginable reaſon to aſſent to the truth of this Propoſition that *the commandments of God are not grievous.*

I. The Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſuitable to our nature and advantageous to our intereſt. 'Tis true God hath a ſovereign right over us as we are his creatures, and by virtue of this right he might without injuſtice have impos'd difficult tasks upon us and have requir'd hard things at our hands. But in making Laws for us he hath not made uſe of this right. He hath commanded us nothing in the Goſpel that is either unſuitable to our reaſon, or prejudicial to our intereſt; nay, nothing that is ſevere and againſt the grain of our nature, but when either the apparent neceſſity of our intereſt does require it, or an extraordinary reward is promis'd to our obedience. *He hath ſhew'd thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* This is the ſum of the natural Law, that we ſhould behave our ſelves reverently and obediently towards the Divine Majeſty, and juſtly and charitably towards men; and that in order to the fitting of us for the better diſcharge of theſe duties, we ſhould govern our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights with temperance and moderation. And if we go over the Laws of Chriſtianity, we ſhall find that, excepting a very few particulars, they enjoyn the very ſame things; only they have made our duty more clear and certain. But this I have had occaſion to make out largely in the foregoing *diſcourſe*, and therefore I ſhall ſay the leſs to it now.

As to the ſeveral parts of God's worſhip and ſervice, *prayer* and *thankſgiving*, *hearing* and *reading* the *Word of God*, and *receiving* of the *Sacrament*; theſe are all no leſs for our own comfort and advantage than for the honour of God and Religion. And there is nothing of difficulty or trouble in the external performance of them, but what hypocriſy can make tolerable to it ſelf: And certainly they muſt be not only much more eaſy, but even delightful, when they are directed by our underſtandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections.

As for thoſe Laws of Religion which concern our duty to our ſelves, as *temperance* and *chaſtity*; or to others, as the ſeveral branches of *juſtice* and *charity*, comprehended in thoſe general rules, *of loving our neighbour as our ſelves*, and *of doing to others as we would have them to do to us:* There is nothing in all theſe Laws but what is moſt reaſonable and fit to be done by us, nothing but what if we were to conſult our own intereſt and happineſs, and did rightly underſtand our ſelves, we would chuſe for our ſelves; nothing but what is eaſy to be underſtood, and as eaſy to be practis'd by an honeſt and a willing mind.

Now the practice of all these is suitable to our nature, and agreeable to the frame of our understandings; proper to our condition and circumstances in this world, and preparatory to our happiness in the next. And no man's reason did ever dictate to him the contrary of any of these; that it is fit for a Creature not to love God, to be undutiful to his great Soveraign, and ungrateful to his best benefactor; that it is reasonable for a man to debauch himself by intemperance and brutish sensuality; to hate, defraud and oppress other men. Our very natural reason, if we will but listen to the dictates of it, is an enemy to all these sins, and a law against all these vices.

And as the practice of all piety and virtue is agreeable to our reason, so is it likewise for the interest of mankind; both of private persons, and of publick Societies, as I have already shown. Some vertues plainly tend to the preservation of our health, others to the improvement and security of our estates, all to the peace and quiet of our minds; and which is somewhat more strange, to the advancement of our esteem and reputation; for though the world be generally bad, and men are apt to approve nothing so much as what they do themselves; yet, I know not how it comes to pass, men are commonly so just to virtue and goodness, as to praise it in others even when they do not practise it themselves.

And as for those precepts of Christianity which seem to be most harsh and difficult at first appearance, (as *repentance* and *restitution*, *mortification* of our *lusts* and *passions*, *humility*, *patience* and *contentedness* with our condition, and *resignation* of our selves to the will of God; *forgiving and loving our enemies*, and *self-denial* for the cause of God and Religion) if we look well into them and consider throughly the nature and tendency of them, even these will appear to be both reasonable in themselves, and upon one account or other really for our advantage.

What more reasonable than *repentance*, than that a man when he hath done amiss and contrary to his duty should be heartily sorry for it, and resolve to do so no more? And how grievous soever it be, it is necessary, being the only way to pardon and peace. And in case our offence against God hath been complicated with injury to men, it is but reasonable we should make *restitution* as far as we are able, according to the nature of the injury. For without this our repentance is not real, because we have not done what we can to undo our fault as much as we can, or at least to hinder the injurious consequences of it from proceeding any farther: Nor can any man be judg'd to be truly sorry for his sin that retains the profit and advantages of it to himself. Besides, that till reparation be made to the utmost of our power we can have no peace in our own consciences, nor any well-grounded hopes of forgiveness from God.

Mortification of our lusts and passions, though, like *repentance*, it have something in it that is troublesome, yet nothing that is unreasonable, or really to our prejudice. If we give way to our Passions, we do but gratify our selves for the present in order to our future disquiet; but if we resist and conquer them, we lay the foundation of perpetual peace and tranquility in our minds. If we govern our selves in the use of sensual delights by the Laws of God and reason, we shall find our selves more at ease than if we should let loose the reins to our appetites and lusts. For the more we gratify our lusts the more craving they will be, and the more impatient of denial. *Crescit indulgens sibi dirus hydrops*, every lust is a kind of hydropick distemper, and the more we drink the more we shall thirst. So that by retrenching our inordinate desires we do not rob our selves of any true pleasure, but only prevent the pain and trouble of farther dissatisfaction.

Humility,

Humility, though it may seem to expose a man to some contempt, yet it is truly the readiest way to honour : as on the contrary, *pride* is a most improper and absurd means for the accomplishing of the end it aims at. All other vices do in some measure attain their end ; covetousness does usually [redacted] estate, and ambitious endeavours do often advance men to high places ; but pride and insolence and contempt of others do infallibly defeat their own design. They aim at respect and esteem but never attain it, for all mankind do naturally hate and slight a proud man.

What more reasonable than *patience* and *contentedness*, and that we should in all things *resign* up our selves to the will of God, who loves us as well as we do our selves, and knows what is good for us better than we do our selves ? this certainly is the best way to prevent anxiety and perplexity of mind, and to make the worst condition as tolerable as it can be, and much more easy than it would be otherwise.

As for that peculiar *Law* of Christianity which forbids *revenge*, and commands us to *forgive injuries* and to *love our enemies*, no man can think it grievous who considers the pleasure and sweetness of love and the glorious victory of overcoming evil with good, and then compares these with the restless torment and perpetual tumults of a malicious and revengeful spirit.

And lastly, *Self-denial for the cause of God and Religion* ; this is neither unreasonable nor to our disadvantage. If we consider our infinite obligations to God, we have no reason to think much to sacrifice to him our dearest interests in this world ; especially if we consider withal, how disproportionably great the reward of our sufferings shall be in another world. Besides that the interest of Religion is of so great concernment to the happiness of mankind, that every man is bound for that reason to assert the truth of it with the hazard of any thing that is most valuable to him in this world.

II. We are not destitute of sufficient power and strength for the performing of God's commands. Had God given us Laws but no power to keep them, his commandments would then indeed have been grievous. 'Tis true we have contracted a great deal of weakness and impotency by our wilful degeneracy from goodness, but that grace which the Gospel offers to us for our assistance is sufficient for us. And this seems to be the particular reason why the Apostle says here in the *Text* that *his commandments are not grievous*, because he offers us an assistance proportionable to the difficulty of his commands, and the necessity of our condition: for it follows immediately after the *Text*, *For whosoever is born of God*, *overcometh the world.* Therefore the *commandments* of God *are not grievous*, because every Child of God, *that is*, every Christian is endued with a power whereby he is enabled to resist and conquer the temptations of the world. The same Apostle elsewhere encourages Christians upon the same consideration, *greater is he that is in you*, *than he that is in the world.* Though we be encompass'd with many and potent enemies who make it their business to tempt and to deter us from our duty , yet our case is not hard so long as we have a great strength on our side: And this the Apostle tells us is the case of every Christian, *greater is he that is in you*, *than he that is in the world.* Are there 1 Joh 4.4
legions of Devils who are continually designing and working our ruin ? there are also myriads of good Angels who are more chearful and officious to do us good. For I doubt not, but as those who are bent to do wickedly will never want tempters to urge them on and to push them forward in an evil course; so on the other hand, those who apply themselves seriously to

the business of Religion, and yield themselves tractable to good motions, will find the good spirit of God more ready and active to encourage them than the Devil can be to pull them back; unless we think that God hath given a greater power and a larger commission to the Devil to do men mischief, than to his holy Spirits and his holy Angels for our assistance and encouragement. But then we are to understand that this assistance is only offer'd to men, and not forc'd upon them whether they will or no. For if we beg God's grace but neglect to make use of it, if we implore his assistance for the mortifying of our lusts but will not contribute our own endeavours, God will withdraw his grace and take away his holy Spirit from us. Nay, if after we have begun well we do notoriously slacken our endeavours, we forfeit the Divine assistance: If when by God's grace we have in a good measure conquer'd the first difficulties of Religion, and gain'd some habitual strength against sin; if after this we grow careless and remiss, and neglect our guard, and lay our selves open to temptations, God's Spirit will not always strive with us: Notwithstanding all the promises of the Gospel, and the mighty assistances there offer'd to us, if we love any lust, and will with *Sampson* lay our head in *Dalilah*'s lap, we shall be insensibly robb'd of *our strength, and become like other men.*

III. We have the greatest encouragement to the observance of God's commands. Two things make any course of life easy; present pleasure, and the assurance of a future reward. Religion gives part of its reward in hand, the present comfort and satisfaction of having done our duty; and for the rest, it offers us the best security that Heaven can give. Now these two must needs make our duty very easy; a considerable reward in hand, and not only the hopes but the assurance of a far greater recompence hereafter.

1. Present peace and satisfaction of mind, and unexpressible joy and pleasure flowing from the testimony of a good conscience. This is present payment, besides that it is the earnest of a future and greater happiness. And this does naturally spring up in the mind of a good man; *great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.* All Acts of piety and virtue are not only delightful for the present, but they leave peace and contentment behind them: a peace that no outward violence can interrupt or take from us. The pleasures of a holy life have moreover this peculiar advantage of all worldly joys, that we shall never be weary of them; we cannot be cloy'd by the frequent repetition of these pleasures, nor by the long enjoyment of them. I know that some vices pretend to bring great pleasure along with them, and that the delights of a sensual and voluptuous life make a glorious show and are attended with much pomp and noise, like the sports of children and fools which are loud and clamorous; or, as *Solomon* elegantly compares them, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, which makes a little noise and a sudden blaze that is presently over. But the serious and the manly pleasures, the solid and substantial joys, are only to be found in the ways of Religion and virtue. The most sensual man that ever was in the world never felt his heart touch'd with so delicious and lasting a pleasure as that is which springs from a clear conscience, and a mind fully satisfied with his own actions.

2. But the great encouragement of all is the assurance of a future reward. The firm persuasion whereof is enough to raise us above any thing in this world, and to animate us with courage and resolution against the greatest difficulties. So the *Apostle* reasons; *His commandments are not grievous; for*

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whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. The belief of a future happiness and glory was that which made the primitive Christians so victorious over the world, and gave them the courage to resist all the pleasures and terrors of Sense. It cannot be deny'd, but that a religious course of life is liable to be incumbred with many difficulties which are naturally grievous to flesh and blood. But a Christian is able to comfort himself under all these with the thoughts of his end, which is *everlasting life.* He considers the goodness of God which he believes would not deny him the free enjoyment of the things of this world, were it not that he hath such joys and pleasures in store for him as will abundantly recompence his present self-denial and sufferings.

Let us now put both these together, the *pleasures* of Religion and the *rewards* of it, and they cannot but appear to be a mighty encouragement. With what pleasure does a man that lives a holy and a virtuous life despise the pleasures of sin, and notwithstanding all the allurements of sense persist resolutely in his Course? And how is such a man confirm'd in his purpose and animated in his holy resolution, when he finds that God and his own conscience do applaud his choice; when all along in the course of Religion and a virtuous life, in his conflicts with sin, and resistance of temptations, he hath for his present reward the two great pleasures of innocence and of victory, and for his future encouragement the joyful hopes of a Crown and a Kingdom? A recompence so great, as is sufficient to make a lame man walk, enough to make any one willing to offer violence to his strongest passions and inclinations. A man would be content to strive with himself and to conflict with great difficulties, in hopes of a mighty reward. What poor man would not cheerfully carry a great burthen of gold and silver, that were assur'd to have the greatest share of it for his pains, and thereby to be made a man for ever? Whatever difficulties Religion is attended withal they are all sweeten'd and made easy by the proposal of a great and eternal reward.

But are there no difficulties then in Religion? Is every thing so plain and easy? Are all the ways of virtue so smooth and even as we have here represented them? Hath not our *Saviour* told us, that *strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it?* Does not the *Apostle* say, *that through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God?* And, *that all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution?* And does not the *Scripture* every where speak of *striving* and *wrestling*, and *running*, and *fighting*; of *labouring*, and *watching*, and *giving all diligence?* And is there nothing grievous in all this?

Mat. 7. 14. Acts 14. 22. 2 Tim. 3. 12.

This is a very material objection; and therefore I shall be the more careful to give a satisfactory answer to it. And that I may do it the more distinctly be pleas'd to consider these *six* things. 1. That the suffering of persecution for Religion is an extraordinary case, which did chiefly concern the first Ages of Christianity. 2. That this discourse concerning the easiness of God's commands does all along suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the entrance upon a Religious course. 3. Nor is there any reason it should exclude our after-care and diligence. 4. All the difficulties of Religion are very much mitigated and allayed by hope and by love. 5. There is incomparably more difficulty and trouble in the ways of sin and vice than in the ways of Religion and Virtue. 6. If we do but put virtue and vice, a religious and a wicked course of life in equal circumstances; if we will but suppose a man as much accustom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, then I shall not doubt to pronounce that the advantages of ease and pleasure will be found to be on the side of Religion.

 I. The

I. The suffering of persecution for Religion is an extraordinary case, and did chiefly concern the first Ages of Christianity. And therefore the general sayings of our Saviour and his Apostles concerning the persecuted state of Christians are to be limited, as doubtless they were intended, principally to those first times, and by no means to be equally extended to all Ages of the Church. At first indeed whoever embrac'd the profession of Christianity did thereby expose themselves to all the sufferings which the power and malice of the world could afflict them withal: But since *the Kingdoms of the Earth became the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ*, and the Governours of the world began to be Patrons of the Church, 'tis so far from being universally true that every Christian hath suffer'd the violence of persecution, that it hath been a rare case and happen'd only in some few ages, and to some persons. So that this is accidental to a state of Religion, and therefore ought not to be reckon'd among the ordinary difficulties of it. And when it happens God gives extraordinary supports, and promises mighty rewards to make it tolerable

II. This discourse concerning the easiness of God's commands does all along suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course, except only in those persons who have had the happiness to be train'd up to Religion by the easy and insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous education. These indeed are freed from a great deal of pains and difficulty which others who are reclaim'd from a bad course of life must expect to undergo. They are in a great measure excused from the pangs of the new birth, from the pains of a sudden and violent change, from the terrors of an affrighted mind, and from the deep and piercing sorrows of a more solemn repentance. Whereas those who have lived wickedly before must look to meet with a great deal more trouble, because they are put upon changing the whole course of their life at once, and must contend with inveterate habits, and offer no small violence to themselves in plucking up those vices which have been rooted in them by long custom and continuance. This indeed is grievous and must needs be sensibly painful, like the *plucking out of a right eye*, or the *cutting off a right hand:* For in this case a man must strive against the very bent and inclination of his strongest appetites, against the tyranny of custom and the mighty power of a second nature. But this is no just reflection upon religion, because this does not proceed from the nature of God's laws, but from an accidental indisposition in our selves, which Religion is apt to remove: And if we will but allow some time of trouble and uneasiness for the cure, when that is once wrought the commands of God will be more easy and delightful to us than ever our sins and lusts were.

III. Nor does this exclude our after-care and diligence. For when the *Apostle* says that *the commandments of God are not grievous*, he does by no means intend to insinuate that they are calculated for slothful and lazy persons, that they are so easy as to require no industry and endeavour on our part; he only aims to prevent a tacit objection which lies at the bottom of many mens hearts, as if Religion were a most grievous and intollerable burthen, and there were more trouble and less pleasure in it than in any other action of humane life. This he utterly denies, but does not hereby intend to exclude such diligence and industry as men use about other matters. And if I should tell you, that the business of Religion does not require a very vigorous prosecution and great earnestness of endeavour, I shall speak quite besides the holy *Scriptures*, which so frequently command *seeking* and *striving* and *labouring*, besides many other such *phrases* that import

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port diligence and earnestness. And indeed it were unfit that so excellent and glorious a reward as the *Gospel* promises should stoop down like fruit upon a full-laden bough to be pluck'd by every idle and wanton hand; that Heaven should be prostituted to the lazy desires and faint wishes, to the cheap and ordinary endeavours of slothful men. God will not so much disparage eternal life and happiness, as to bestow it upon those who have conceived so low an opinion of it as not to think it worth the labouring for. And surely this is sufficient to recommend Religion to any considerate man, if the advantages of it be much greater than of any worldly design that we can propound to our selves, and the difficulties of it not greater. If the same seriousness and industry of endeavour, which men commonly use to raise a fortune and advance themselves in the world, will serve to make a man a good man and to bring him to Heaven, what reason hath any man to complain of the hard terms of Religion? And I think I may truly say that usually less than this does it. For God considers our condition in this world and the pressing necessities of this life, that we are flesh as well as spirit, and that we have great need of these things, and therefore he allows us to be very sedulous and industrious about them. However this I am sure of, that if men would be as serious to save their immortal souls as they are to support these dying bodies; if they would but provide for eternity with the same solicitude and real care as they do for this life; if they would but seek Heaven with the same ardor of affection, and vigour of prosecution as they seek earthly things; if they would but love God as much as many men do the World, and mind godliness as much as men usually do gain; if they would but go to Church with as good a will as men ordinarily do to their Markets and Fairs, and be in as good earnest at their devotions as men commonly are in driving a bargain; if they would but endure some troubles and inconveniences in the ways of Religion with the same patience and constancy as they can do storms, and foul ways and mischances, when they are travelling about their worldly occasions; If they would but avoid bad company as men use to do cheaters, and reject the temptations of the Devil and the world as they would do the kind words and insinuations of a man whom they verily believe to have a design to over-reach them; I am confident that such a one could not fail of Heaven, and would be much surer of it upon these terms, than any man that doth all the other things could be of getting an estate, or of attaining any thing in this world.

And cannot every man do thus much? All that I have said signifies no more but that men should use their sincere endeavours: And this surely every man can do. For to use our sincere endeavours is nothing else but to do as much as we can, and it is nonsense for any man to deny that he can do as much as he can. And if we would do thus much we are sure of God's grace and assistance, which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men. But men expect that Religion should cost them no pains, that happiness should drop into their laps without any design and endeavour on their part, and that after they have done what they please while they live God should snatch them up to Heaven when they dye. But though *the commandments of God be not grievous*, yet it is fit to let men know that they are not thus easy.

IV. All the difficulties of Religion are very much allay'd and sweeten'd by *hope* and by *love*. By the *hopes* of a mighty reward; so great as is enough to raise us above our selves, and to make us break through all difficulties and discouragements. And by the *love* of God, who hath taken all imaginable

nable ways to endear himſelf to us. He gave us our beings, and when we were fallen from that happineſs to which at firſt we were deſign'd, he was pleas'd to reſtore us to a new capacity of it by ſending his only Son into the world to dye for us. So that if we have any ſenſe of kindneſs we cannot but love Him who hath done ſo much to oblige us, and if we love him entirely nothing that he commands will be grievous to us; nay, ſo far from that, that the greateſt pleaſure we are capable of will be to pleaſe him. For nothing is difficult to love. It will make a man deny himſelf and croſs his own inclinations to pleaſure them whom he loves. It is a paſſion of a ſtrange power where it reigns, and will cauſe a man to ſubmit to thoſe things with delight which in other circumſtances would ſeem grievous to him. *Jacob* ſerv'd for *Rachel ſeven years*, and after that *ſeven years more; and they ſeem'd unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* Did but the love of God rule in our hearts, and had we as real an affection for him as ſome men have for their friends, there are no ſuch difficulties in Religion but what love would conquer, and the ſevereſt parts of it would become eaſy when they were once undertaken by a willing mind.

V. There is incomparably more trouble in the ways of ſin and vice than in thoſe of Religion and Virtue. Every notorious ſin is naturally attended with ſome inconvenience of harm, or danger, or diſgrace; which the ſinner ſeldom conſiders till the ſin be committed, and then he is in a labyrinth, and in ſeeking the way out of a preſent inconvenience he entangles himſelf in more. He is glad to make uſe of indirect arts, and laborious crafts, to avoid the conſequence of his faults; and many times is fain to cover one ſin with another, and the more he ſtrives to diſentangle himſelf the more is he *ſnar'd in the work of his own hands.* Into what perplexities did *David*'s ſin bring him? ſuch as by all his power and arts he could not free himſelf from: He was glad to commit a greater crime to avoid the ſhame of a leſs, and could find no other way to conceal his adultery but by plunging himſelf into the guilt of murther. And thus it is proportionably in all other vices. The ways of ſin are *crooked paths*, full of windings and turnings; but *the way of holineſs* and virtue is a *high-way*, and lies ſo plain before us that *way-*
Iſa. 35. 8. *faring men, though fools, ſhall not err therein.* There needs no skill to keep a man's ſelf true and honeſt; if we will but reſolve to deal juſtly and to *ſpeak the truth to our neighbour*, nothing in the whole world is eaſier: For there is nothing of artifice and reach required to enable a man to ſpeak as he thinks, and to do to others as he would be dealt withall himſelf.

And as the ways of ſin are full of intricacy and perplexities, ſo likewiſe of trouble and diſquiet. There is no man that wilfully commits any ſin but his conſcience ſmites him for it, and his guilty mind is frequently gall'd with the remembrance of it, but the reflection upon honeſt and virtuous actions hath nothing of regret and diſquiet in it. No man's conſcience ever troubled him for not being diſhoneſt, no man's reaſon ever challeng'd him for not being drunk, no man ever broke his ſleep or was haunted with fears of divine vengeance becauſe he was conſcious to himſelf that he had *liv'd ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in the world.* But with the ungodly it is not ſo. There is no man that is knowingly wicked but he is guilty to himſelf, and there is no man that carries guilt about him but he hath received a ſting into his Soul which makes him reſtleſs, ſo that he can never have any perfect eaſe and pleaſure in his mind.

I might have deſcended to particular Inſtances, and have ſhewn how much more troubleſome the practice of every ſin and vice is than the exerciſe of the contrary grace and virtue; but that would be too large a Subject to be brought within the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe.

VI. Let

VI. Let but virtue and vice, a religious and wicked course of life be put in equal circumstances, do but suppose a man to be as much accustom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, and then I doubt not but the advantages of ease and pleasure will be found to be on the side of Religion. And if we do not put the case thus we make an unequal comparison. For there is no man but when he first begins a wicked course feels a great deal of regret in his mind, the terrors of his conscience and the fears of damnation are very troublesome to him. It is possible that by degrees a man may harden his conscience, and by a long custom of sinning may in a great measure wear off that tender sense of good and evil which makes sin so uneasy: But then if in the practice of a holy life a man may by the same degrees arrive to far greater peace and tranquility of mind than ever any wicked man found in a sinful course, if by custom virtue will come to be more pleasant than ever vice was, then the advantage is plainly on the side of Religion. And this is truly the case. It is troublesome at first for a man to begin any new course, and to do contrary to what he hath been accustom'd to; but let a man but habituate himself to a religious and virtuous life, and the trouble will go off by degrees, and unspeakable pleasure succeed in the room of it. It is an excellent rule which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars, *optimum vitæ genus eligito, nam consuetudo faciet jucundissimum*; *pitch upon the best course of life*, resolve always to do that which is most reasonable and virtuous, *and custom will soon render it the most easy*. There is nothing of difficulty in a good life but what may be conquer'd by custom as well as the difficulties of any other course, and when a man is once us'd to it the pleasure of it will be greater than of any other course.

Let no man then decline or forsake Religion for the pretended difficulties of it, and lay aside all cares of God's commandments upon this suggestion that they are impossible to be kept. For you see they are not only possible but easy. And those who upon pretence of the trouble and difficulties of Religion abandon themselves to a wicked course of life may easily be convinc'd that they take more pains to make themselves miserable than would serve to bring them to happiness. There is no man that is a servant of sin, and a slave to any base lust, but might if he pleas'd get to Heaven with less trouble than he goes to hell.

So that upon consideration of the whole matter, there is no reason why any man should be deterr'd from a holy and virtuous life for fear of the labour and pains of it. Because every one that is wicked takes more pains in another way, and is more industrious only to a worse purpose. Now he that can travel in deep and foul ways ought not to say that he cannot walk in fair. He that ventures to run upon a precipice when every step he takes is with danger of his life and his soul, ought not to pretend any thing against the plain and safe paths of Religion, which will entertain us with pleasure all along in the way, and crown us with happiness at the end.

SERMON VII.

Of the Obligation of Christians to a Holy Life.

2 TIM. II. 19.

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.

THE whole verse runs thus: *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

In which words the Apostle declares to us the terms of the covenant between God and man. For the word θεμέλιος which is here translated *foundation*, according to the usual signification of it, is likewise (as learned men have observ'd) sometimes used for an instrument of contract whereby two parties do oblige themselves mutually to each other. And this notion of the word agrees very well with what follows concerning the *seal* affix'd to it, which is very suitable to a *Covenant* but not at all to a *foundation.* 'Tis true indeed, as the learned *Grotius* hath observ'd there used anciently to be inscriptions on foundation-stones, and the word σφραγὶς which we render *seal* may likewise signify an *inscription*; and then the sense will be very current thus, *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this* inscription. But it is to be considered, that though σφραγὶς may signify an *inscription*, yet it is only an *inscription* upon a *seal*, which hath no relation to a foundation, but is very proper to a covenant or mutual obligation. And accordingly the *seal* affix'd to this *instrument*, or covenant between God and man is in allusion to the custom of those countries said to have an inscription on both sides agreeable to the condition of the persons contracting. On God's part there is this *impress* or inscription, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*, that is, God will own and reward those that are faithful to him: And on our part, *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, that is, that calls himself a Christian. For to name the name of any one or to have his name call'd upon by us does according to the use of this Phrase among the *Hebrews*, signify nothing else but to be denominated from him. Thus 'tis frequently used in the *Old* Testament, and sometimes in the *New*, *Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?* (James 2. 7.) that is, the name or title of Christians; and that expression, *if ye be reproached for the name of Christ*, (1 Pet. 4. 14.) is at the sixteenth verse varied, *if any man suffer as a Christian.* So that to name the name of Christ is to call our selves Christians.

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. The word ἀδικία is often taken strictly for injustice or unrighteousness, but sometimes used more largely for sin and wickedness in the general. And so it seems to be used here in the Text, because there is no reason from the context

text to reſtrain it to any particular kind of ſin or vice, and becauſe Chriſtianity lays an equal obligation upon men to abſtain from all ſin. *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity*, that is, every Chriſtian obligeth himſelf by his profeſſion to renounce all ſin and to live a holy life.

In ſpeaking to this argument I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. Shew what obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives.

2. Endeavour to perſwade thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians to anſwer this obligation.

I. What obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives. He that calls himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to entertain the Doctrine of Chriſt, to live in the imitation of his holy example, and to have ſolemnly engaged himſelf to all this. I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe, and then come to that which I principally intend, to perſwade men to live accordingly.

1. He that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, to believe the whole Goſpel, to aſſent to all the articles of the Chriſtian faith, to all the precepts and promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel. Now the great deſign, the proper intention of this doctrine is to take men off from ſin, and to direct and encourage them to a holy life. It teacheth us what we are to believe concerning God and Chriſt, not with any deſign to entertain our minds with the bare ſpeculation of thoſe truths but to better our lives. For every article of our faith is a proper argument againſt ſin, and a powerful motive to obedience. The whole hiſtory of Chriſt's appearance in the world, all the diſcourſes and actions of his life, and the ſufferings of his death do all tend to this; the ultimate iſſue of all is the *deſtroying of ſin*; ſo St. *John* tells us, *for this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.* 1 John 3. 8. But this is moſt expreſly and fully declar'd to us, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12, 13, 14. *The Grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

The *precepts* of the Goſpel do ſtrictly command holineſs, and that univerſal; the purity of our ſouls, and the chaſtity of our bodies; *to cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*; 2 Cor. 7. 1. *to abſtain from all kind of evil*; 1 Theſ. 5. 22. *to be holy in all manner of converſation.* 1 Pet. 1. 15. They require us to endeavour after the higheſt degrees of holineſs that are attainable by us in this imperfect ſtate, *to be holy as he that hath called us is holy*; *to be perfect as our father which is in heaven is perfect.* Mat. 5. 48.

And all the *promiſes* of the Goſpel are ſo many encouragements to obedience and a holy life; *having therefore theſe promiſes, let us cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfect holineſs in the fear of God.* 2 Cor. 7. 1. We are told by St. *Peter* that theſe exceeding great and precious promiſes are given to us that by theſe *we might be partakers of a Divine nature, having eſcaped the pollution that is in the world through luſt*; 2 Pet. 1. 4. and that we might *give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance and patience and brotherly kindneſs and charity.*

And the *threatnings* of the Gospel are so many powerful arguments against sin.

Rom. 1. 16, 18. Therefore the Apostle calls the *Gospel the power of God unto salvation*, because therein the *wrath of God is reveal'd from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. So that if we call our selves Christians we profess to embrace the holy doctrine of the Christian Religion which is perfectly opposite to all impiety and wickedness of life. We profess to be governed by those laws which do strictly enjoin holiness and virtue. We profess to be persuaded that all the promises and threatnings of the Gospel are true, which offer such great and glorious rewards to obedience, and threaten transgression and disobedience with such dreadful punishments. And if so, we are obliged both by our reason and our interest to live accordingly.

2. He that professeth himself a Christian professeth to live in the imitation of Christ's example and to follow his steps *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. The Son of God came into the World not only by his Doctrine to instruct us in the way to happiness and by his death to make expiation of Sin, but by his life to be an example to us of holiness and virtue. Therefore in Scripture we find several *Titles* given him which import his exemplariness, as of a *Prince* and a *Captain*, a *Master* and a *Guide*. Now if he be our pattern we should endeavour to be like him, *to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus; to walk in love as he also hath loved us and given himself for us*. We should aspire after the highest degree of holiness, make it our constant and sincere endeavour to please God and do his will and *to fulfil all righteousness* as he did. Does any man profess himself a Christian and yet abandons himself to intemperance and filthy lusts? is this like our Saviour? Are we cruel and unmerciful? is this like the High-Priest of our profession? Are we proud and passionate, malicious and revengeful? is this to be like-minded with Christ who was meek and lowly in Spirit, who prayed for his enemies and offer'd up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it? If we call our selves Christians we profess to have the life of Christ continually before us, and to be always correcting and reforming our lives by that pattern.

3. He that calls himself a Christian hath solemnly engaged himself to renounce all sin and to live a holy life. By Baptism we have solemnly taken upon us the profession of Christianity, and engaged our selves to renounce the Devil and all his works, and obediently to keep God's commandments. Anciently those who were baptised put off their garments, which signified the putting off the body of sin; and were immers'd and buried in the water, to represent their death of sin; and then did rise up again out of the water, to signify their entrance upon a new life. And to these customs the Rom. 6. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Apostle alludes when he says, *How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein; Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroy'd, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* So that by Baptism we profess to be entered into a new state, and to be endued with a new nature; *to have put off the old man with his deeds*; to have quitted *our former conversation, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*, and to be *renewed in the spirit of our minds*, and to have *put on the new man which after God is created*

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in righteousness and true holiness. And therefore Baptism is called the *putting on of Christ; As many of you as have been baptiz'd into Christ, have put on Christ.* Gal. 3. 27. Now if we profess to have put on Christ we must quit and renounce our lusts, because these are inconsistent, as appears by the opposition which the Apostle makes between them; *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.* Rom. 13. 14.

And as we did solemnly covenant with God to this purpose in Baptism, so we do solemnly renew this obligation so often as we receive the blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Therefore the cup in the Sacrament is called the *new Covenant in his Blood*, that is, this represents the shedding of Christ's blood, by which rite the covenant between God and man is ratified. And as by this God doth confirm his promises to us, so we do oblige our selves to be faithful and obedient to him, *and if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, that is, after we are become Christians, *we account the blood of the Covenant a common thing*, that is, we make nothing of the solemnest *rite* that ever was used in the world for confirmation of any covenant, the shedding of the blood of the Son of God. And that this was always understood to be the meaning of this holy Sacrament, to renew our Covenant with God, and solemnly to confirm our resolutions of a holy life is very plain from that account which *Pliny* * gives us of the worship of the Christians in a Letter to *Trajan* the Emperor; in which he tells him, *that they assembled early in the morning before day, to sing a Hymn to Christ as God*; and then (saith he) they do *sacramento se obstringere, bind themselves by a sacrament or oath not to rob or steal or commit adultery, not to break their word or falsify their trust, and after they have eaten together they depart home.* Which is plainly an account of the Christians celebrating of the holy Sacrament, which it seems was then look'd upon as an *oath* whereby Christians did solemnly covenant and engage themselves against all wickedness and vice.

* *Plin.* Epist. l. 10. Epist. 97.

Thus you see what obligation the profession of Christianity lays upon us to holiness of life. From all which it is evident that the Gospel requires something on our part. For the Covenant between God and us is a mutual engagement, and as there are *blessings* promised on his part so there are *conditions* to be performed on ours. And if we live wicked and unholy lives, if we neglect our duty towards God we have no title at all to the blessings of this Covenant. The contrary doctrine to this hath been greedily entertained to the vast prejudice of Christianity, as if in this new Covenant of the Gospel God took all upon himself, and required nothing, or as good as nothing, of us, that it would be a disparagement to the freedom of God's grace to think he expects any thing from us. That the Gospel is all promises, and our part is only to believe and embrace them, that is, to be confident that God will perform them if we can but think so, though we do nothing else; which is an easy condition to fools but the hardest in the world to a wise man, who if his salvation depended upon it could never perswade himself to believe that the holy God without any respect at all to his repentance and amendment would bestow upon him forgiveness of sins and eternal life, only because he was confident that God would do so. As if any man could think that it were a thing so highly acceptable to God that men should believe of him that he loves to dispense his grace and mercy upon the most unfit and unreasonable terms. A Covenant does necessarily imply a mutual obligation, and the Scripture plainly tells us what are the terms and conditions of this covenant both on God's part and ours, namely, that he *will be our God* and we *shall be his people.* But he hath no where said that

though we be not *his people* yet he will be *our God.* The *seal* of this Covenant hath two *inscriptions* upon it; one on God's part, that he will *know them that are his*; and another on our part, that we shall *depart from iniquity.* But if we will not submit to this condition God will not know us, but will bid us depart from him. So our Saviour tells us, *I will say unto them depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I know you not.* If we deal falsly in covenant with God and break loose from all our engagements to him, we release God from all the promises that he hath made to us. If we neglect to perform those conditions upon which he hath suspended the performance of his promises, we discharge the obligation on God's part, and he remains faithful though he deny us that happiness which he promised under those conditions which we have neglected.

Mat. 7.23.

II. I come now to the *second* thing propounded, and that is to perswade those who profess Christianity to answer those obligations to a holy life which their Religion lays upon them. We all call our selves Christians, and would be very much offended at any man that should deny us this title. But let us not cheat our selves with an empty and insignificant name, but if we will call our selves Christians let us fill up this great title, and make good our profession by a suitable life and practice. And to perswade us hereto, I will urge these three considerations.

1. The indecency of the contrary.
2. The great scandal of it to our blessed Saviour and his holy Religion: And
3. The infinite danger of it to our own souls.

1. Consider how unbecoming it is for a man to live unsuitably to his profession. If we call our selves Christians we profess to entertain the doctrine of the Gospel, to be taught and instructed by the best master, to be the disciples of the highest and most perfect institution that ever was in the world, to have embraced a Religion which contains the most exact rules for the conduct and government of our lives, which lays down the plainest precepts, sets before us the best patterns and examples of a holy life, and offers us the greatest assistances and encouragements to this purpose. We profess to be furnished with the best arguments to excite us to holiness and virtue, to be awed with the greatest fears and animated with the best hopes of any men in the world.

Now whoever makes such a profession as this obligeth himself to live answerably, to do nothing that shall grosly contradict it. Nothing is more absurd than for a man to act contrary to his profession, to pretend to great matters and perform nothing of what he pretends to. Wise men will not be caught with pretences nor be imposed upon with an empty profession, but they will enquire into our lives and actions, and by these they will make a judgment of us. They cannot see into our hearts nor pry into our understandings to discover what it is that we inwardly believe, they cannot discern those secret and supernatural principles that we pretend to be acted by: But this they can do, they can examine our actions and behold our good or bad works, and try whether our lives be indeed answerable to our profession and do really excel the lives of other men who do not pretend to such great things. There are a great many sagacious persons who will easily find us out, will look under our mask, and see through all our fine pretensions, and will quickly discern the absurdity of telling the world that we believe one thing when we do the contrary.

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If we profess to believe the Christian Religion, we expose our selves to the scorn and contempt of every discerning man if we do not live up to it. With what face can any man continue in the practice of any known sin that professeth to believe the holy doctrine of the Gospel which forbids all sin under the highest and severest penalties? If we did but believe the history of the Gospel as we do any ordinary credible story, and did we but regard the laws of Christianity as we do the laws of the Land; were we but persuaded, that fraud and oppression, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanness, covetousness and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and Religion will bring men to hell as certainly as treason and felony will bring a man under the sentence of the Law: Had we but the same awe and regard for the threatnings and promises of the Gospel that we have for the frowns and smiles of those who are in power and authority, even this would be effectual to keep us from sin. And if the Gospel have not this effect upon us it is an argument that we do not believe it.

'Tis to no purpose to go about to persuade men that we do heartily entertain the doctrine of Christ, *that doctrine* which hath all the characters of piety and justice, of holiness and virtue upon it; which obligeth men to *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are chast, whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report*, if we have no regard to these things in our lives. He that would know what a man believes, let him attend rather to what he does than to what he talks. He that leads a wicked life makes a more credible and effectual profession of infidelity than he who in words only denies the Gospel. It is the hardest thing in the world to imagine that *that* man believes Christianity who by ungodliness and worldly lusts does deny and renounce it. If we profess our selves Christians, it may justly be expected from us that we should evidence this by our actions, that we should live at another rate than the Heathens did; that we who worship a holy and just God should not allow our selves the liberty to sin as those did who worshipped such Gods as were examples of sin and patrons of their vices. Thou who professest thy self a Christian may'st not walk in the lusts of the flesh and of uncleanness as those were who worshipped a lustful *Jupiter* and a wanton *Venus*. Thou may'st not be intemperate as those were who worshipped a drunken *Bacchus*. Thou may'st not be cruel and unmerciful as those were who worshipped a fierce *Saturn*: Nor may'st thou steal as those did who worshipped a thievish *Mercury*. Thou must remember that thou art a Christian, and when thou art ready to debase thy self to any vile lust consider what title thou bearest, by what name thou art called, whose disciple thou art; and then say to thy self, shall I allow my self in any impiety or wickedness of life who pretend to be instructed by that grace of God which teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts? Shall I cherish any sinful passion who pretend to have mortified all these and to have *put off the old man with his deeds*?

It is not being gilded over with the external profession of Christianity that will avail us, our Religion must be a vital principle inwardly to change and transform us. What the Apostle says concerning Circumcision we may apply to them that are baptized and make an outward profession of Christianity; Baptism verily profiteth if we obey the Gospel, but if we walk contrary to the precepts of it our Baptism is no Baptism, and our Christianity is Heathenism. If by our lives and acti- Rom 2. 25.

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ons we do contradict that Religion which we profess, we do by this very thing prove our selves to be counterfeits and hypocrites; and that we have only taken up our Religion for a fashion, and received it according to custom; we were born in a Country where it is reverenced, and therefore we are of it. And the reason why we are Christians rather than Jews, or Turks, or Heathens, is because Christian Religion had the fortune to come first in our way and to bespeak us at our entrance into the world.

Are we not ashamed to take up a profession upon such slight grounds, and to wear about us such an empty title? It should make our blood to rise in our faces to consider what a distance there is between our Religion and our lives. I remember *Tully* upbraids the Philosophers very smartly for living unsuitably to their Doctrines. A Philosopher (saith he) is unpardonable if he miscarry in his life, *quod in officio cujus magister esse vult, labitur; artemque vitæ professus, delinquit in vita; because he is faulty in that wherein he pretends to be a master, and whilst he professeth an Art of living better than other men he miscarries in this life.* With how much greater reason may we challenge Christians for the miscarriages of their lives, which are so directly contrary to their profession? It may justly be expected that so perfect an Institution as the Gospel is, which the Son of God came from Heaven on purpose to propagate in the world, should make men more strictly holy and virtuous, and set the professors of it at a greater distance from all impurity and vice than ever any institution in the world did. If a man profess any other *Art or Calling* it is expected that he should be skill'd in it, and excel [illegible] who do not pretend to it. 'Tis the greatest disparagement to a Physician that can be, to say of him, that he is in other respects an excellent man only he hath no great skill in diseases, and the methods of cure, because this is his *Profession*: He might be pardon'd for other defects, but the proper skill of his *Art* may justly be expected from him. So for a Christian; to say of him, the worst thing in him is his *life*; he is very orthodox in his opinions, but he's an ill-natur'd man, one of very violent passions, he will be very frequently drunk, he makes no conscience of his dealings, he is very uncharitable to all that differ from him: This man is faulty in his profession, he is defective in that which should be his excellency; he may have orthodox opinions in Religion, but when all is done there is no such error and heresy, nothing so fundamentally opposite to Religion as a wicked life. A Christian does not pretend to have a better wit or a more piercing understanding than a Turk or Heathen, but he professeth to live better than they, to be more chaste and more temperate, more just and more charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men: If he fail in this, where is the *Art* the man boasts of? to what purpose is all this noise and stir about the Gospel and the holy Doctrine of Christ? If any man profess himself a Christian and do not live better than others he is a mere pretender and *Mountebank* in Religion, he's a bungler in his own *Art* and unskill'd in his proper profession. This is the first, the indecency of the thing.

2. Consider how great a scandal this must needs be to our blessed Saviour and his holy Religion. The Christian Religion hath undergone many a hard censure for the miscarriages of the professors of it. The impieties and vices of those who call themselves Christians

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have caused many sharp reflections upon Christianity, and made the Son of God and the Blessed Saviour of the world to wear the odious names of deceiver and impostor. If a man did design to do the greatest spight to Religion he could not give it a deeper wound, he could not take a more effectual course to disparage it than by a lewd and debauch'd life. For this will still be an objection in the minds of those who are strangers and enemies to our Religion. If the Gospel were so excellent an institution as it is reported to be, surely we should see better effects of it in the lives of those who profess it. When we would perswade a Heathen to our Religion, and tell him how holy a God we serve, what excellent patterns we imitate, what spiritual and divine precepts of holiness and virtue our Religion does contain; may not he reply, would you have me to believe you when I see you do not believe your selves? If you believed your Religion you would live according to it. For if the Gospel were every word of it false, if there were neither a Heaven to be hoped for nor a Hell to be feared after this life, how could many Christians live worse than they do?

As we would not proclaim to the world that the Gospel is an unholy and vicious Institution, let us take heed that we bring no scandal upon it by our lives, lest the enemies of our Religion say as *Salvian* tells us they did in his time, *Si Christus Sancta docuisset Christiani sancte vixissent*, surely *if Christ had taught so holy a doctrine Christians would have lived holier lives.* *Tully* tells us that one of the shrewdest arguments that ever was brought against Philosophy was this, *quosdam perfectos Philosophos turpiter vivere, that some great Philosophers led very filthy lives.* *Celsus* and *Porphry*, *Hierocles* and *Julian*, among all their witty invectives against Christian Religion have nothing against it that reflects so much upon it as do the wicked lives of so many Christians. The greatest enmity to Religion is to profess it and to live unanswerably to it.

This consideration ought greatly to affect us. I am sure the Apostle speaks of it with great passion and vehemency, *for many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* A *Jew* or a *Turk* is not so great an enemy to Christianity as a lewd and vicious Christian. Therefore let me beseech Christians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour and the credit of their Religion, that they would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Christianity. And if there be any who are resolved to continue in a vicious course to the injury and disparagement of Christianity, I could almost intreat of them that they would quit their profession and renounce their Baptism, that they would lay aside their title of Christians and initiate themselves in Heathenish rites and superstitions, or be circumcised for *Jews* or *Turks*: For it were really better, upon some accounts, that such men should abandon their Profession, than keep on a vizard which serves to no other purpose but to scare others from Religion.

Phil. .18.

3. And Lastly, Let us consider the danger we expose our selves to by not living answerably to our Religion. And this, I hope, may prevail upon such as are not moved by the former considerations. Hypocrites are instanc'd in Scripture, as a sort of sinners that shall have the sharpest torments and the fiercest damnation. When our Saviour would set forth the great severity of the Lord towards the evil

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Mat. 24. 51. servant he expresseth it thus, *he shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites.* So that the punishment of Hypocrites seems to be made in the measure and standard of the highest punishment. Thou professest to believe in Christ and to hope in him for salvation, but in the mean time thou livest a wicked and unholy life, thou dost not believe but presume on him, and wilt find at the great day that this thy confidence will be thy confusion, and he whom thou hopest will be thy Advocate and Saviour will prove thy Accuser and thy Judge. What our Saviour says to the *Jews, There is one that accuseth you even Moses in whom ye trust*, may very well be applied to false Christians, Joh. 5. 45. there is one that *accuseth* you and will condemn you, *even Jesus in whom ye trust.*

The profession of Christianity and mens having the name of Christ named upon them will be so far from securing them from Hell, that it will sink them the deeper into it. Many are apt to pity the poor Heathens who never heard of the name of Christ, and sadly to condole their case, but as our Saviour said upon another occasion, *Weep not for them, weep for your selves.* There's no such miserable person in the world as a degenerate Christian, because he falls into the greatest misery from the greatest advantages and opportunities of being happy. Dost thou lament the condition of *Socrates*, and *Cato*, and *Aristides*, and doubt what shall become of them at the day of Judgment? and canst thou, who art an impious and prophane Christian, think that thou shalt escape the damnation of Hell?

Dost thou believe that the moral Heathen shall be cast out? and canst thou who hast led a wicked life under the profession of Christianity have the impudence to hope that thou shalt sit down with *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* in the Kingdom of God? No, those sins which are committed by Christians under the enjoyment of the Gospel are of deeper dye and cloathed with blacker aggravations than the sins of Heathens are capable of. A Pagan may live without God in the World, and be unjust towards men, at a cheaper rate and upon easier terms than thou who art a Christian. Better had it been thou hadst never known one syllable of the Gospel, never heard of the name of Christ than that having taken it upon thee thou shouldst not *depart from iniquity*. Happy had it been for thee, that thou hadst been born a *Jew*, or a *Turk*, or a poor *Indian*, rather than that being bred among Christians, and professing thy self of that number, thou shouldst lead a vicious and unholy life.

I have insisted the longer upon these arguments, that I might, if possible, awaken men to a serious consideration of their lives, and persuade them to a real reformation of them; that I may oblige all those who call themselves Christians to live up to the essential and fundamenral Laws of our Religion; to love God, and to love our Neighbour; to do to every man as we would have him to do to us, to mortify our lusts, and subdue our passions, and sincerely to endeavour to grow in every grace and virtue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

This indeed would become our profession and be honourable to our Religion, and would remove one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the Gospel. For how can we expect that the doctrine of God our Saviour should gain any considerable ground in the world, so long as by the unworthy lives of so many Christians 'tis represented to the world at so great disadvantage; If ever we would have Christian Religion effectu-

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ally recommended, it muſt be by the holy and unblameable lives of thoſe who make profeſſion of it. Then indeed it would look with ſo amiable a countenance as to invite many to it, and carry ſo much majeſty and authority in it as to command reverence from its greateſt enemies, and make men to acknowledge that God is in us of a truth, and to glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

The good God grant that as we have taken upon us the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſo we may be careful ſo to live that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; that the grace of God which bringeth ſalvation may teach us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, &c.

SERMON VIII.

Of the Happiness of a Heavenly Conversation.

PHIL. III. 20.

For our Conversation is in Heaven.

FOR the understanding of which words we need to look back no further than the 18*th. verse* of this *Chapter*, where the Apostle with great vehemency and passion speaks of some among the *Philippians*, who indeed profess'd Christianity but yet would do any thing to decline suffering for that profession; *there are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the Cross of Christ*; they cannot endure to suffer with him and for him, they are so sensual and wedded to this world that they will do any thing to avoid persecution; so he describes them in the next *verse*, *whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* Now in opposition to these sensual and earthly-minded men the Apostle gives us the character of the true Christians, they are such as mind Heaven and another world, and prefer the hopes of that to all the interests of this life, *our conversation is in Heavan.*

For the right understanding of which *phrase* be pleased to observe that it is an allusion to a City or Corporation, and to the priviledges and manners of those who are free of it. And Heaven is several times in Scripture represented to us under this notion of a *City*. It is said of *Abraham* that
Heb. 11. 10. *he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*,
Heb. 12. 22. It is called likewise *the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.* And the same Apostle speaking of the uncertain condition of Christians in this
Heb. 14. 14. world says of them, that *here they have no continuing City, but look for one that is to come.*

Now to this *City* the Apostle alludes here in the Text, when he says *our conversation is in Heaven.* For the word πολίτευμα, which is rendred *conversation*, may either signify the *privilege* of Citizens, or their *conversation* and manners, or may take in both these.

In the *first* sense of the *privilege* of Citizens, we find πολιτεία a word of
Acts 22. 28. near affinity with this sometimes us'd; *with a great sum* (says the Captain to *Paul*) *obtained I* τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην, *this freedom.* According to this sense, ἡμῶν τὸ πολίτευμα may very well be rendred, as *Tertullian* often does this Text, *municipatus noster, our Citizenship is in Heaven*; an allusion perhaps (as the learned Dr. *Hammond* observes) to those who though they were not born at *Rome*, and it may be lived at a great distance from it, had yet *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the privilege of *Roman* Citizens. In like manner the Apostle here describes the condition of Christians. 'Tis true, we are born here in this world and live in it, but we belong to another Corporation; we are denizens of another Country and free of that City which is above.

In the other sense of the *conversation* of Citizens we find the verb πολιτεύεσθε used towards the beginning of this *Epistle*, *Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.* Phil. 1. 27. And why may not the word πολίτευμα in the Text, without any inconvenience include both these? as if the Apostle had said, there are some that mind earthly things, and are so addicted to them that rather than part with them they will forsake their Religion; but as for us, we consider that we are Citizens of Heaven, and accordingly we converse and demean our selves in this world as those that are free of another City and do belong to it.

So that to have *our conversation in heaven* does imply these two things.

First, The serious thoughts and considerations of Heaven.

Secondly, The effect which those thoughts ought to have upon our lives.

These two things take up the meaning of my Text, and shall be the subject of the following discourse.

I. The serious thoughts and considerations of Heaven, that is, of the happy and glorious state of good men in another life. And concerning this, there are two things principally which offer themselves to our consideration. *First*, The happiness of this state. *Secondly*, The way and means whereby we may come to partake of this happiness.

First, We will consider the happiness of this state. But what, and how great this happiness is, I am not able to represent to you. These things are yet in a great measure within the veil, and it does not now fully *appear what we shall be.* The Scriptures have reveal'd so much in general concerning the reality and unspeakable felicities of this state as may satisfy us for the present, and serve to inflame our desires after it, and to quicken our endeavours for the obtaining of it; as *namely*, that it is incomparably beyond any happiness of this world; that it is very great; and that it is eternal; in a word, that it is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine.

1. It is incomparably beyond any happiness in this world. It is free from all those sharp and bitter ingredients which do abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world are mix'd, and uncertain, and unsatisfying; nay so far are they from giving us satisfaction, that the very sweetest of them are satiating and cloying.

None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixt. There is something of *vanity* mingled with all our earthly enjoyments, and *that* causeth *vexation of spirit.* There is no sensual pleasure but is either purchas'd by some pain, or attended with it, or ends in it. A great estate is neither to be got without care, nor kept without fear, nor lost without trouble. Dignity and greatness is troublesome almost to all mankind, it is commonly uneasy to them that have it, and it is usually hated and envy'd by those that have it not. Knowledge, that is one of the best and sweetest pleasures of humane life; and yet if we may believe the experience of one, who had as great a share of it as any of the Sons of men ever had, he will tell us, that *this also is vexation of spirit; for in much wisdom there is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.* Eccles. 1. 17, 18.

Thus it is with all the things of this world; the best of them have a mixture of good and evil, of joy and sorrow in them: but the happiness of

the next life is free from allay and mixture. In the description of the
Rev 22.3, 5. *new Jerusalem* it is said, that *there shall be no more curse, and there shall be no night there*, nothing to imbitter our blessings, or obscure our Glory. Heaven is the proper region of happiness, there only are pure joys and an unmingled felicity.

But the enjoyments of this world as they are mix'd, so they are uncertain. So wavering and inconstant are they that we can have no security of them, when we think our selves to have the fastest hold of them they slip out of our hands we know not how. For this reason *Solomon* very elegantly calls them things *that are not*, *Why wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make to themselves wings and fly like an Eagle towards heaven.* So fugitive are they, that after all our endeavours to secure them they may break loose from us, and in an instant vanish out of our sight, *riches make to themselves wings, and fly like an Eagle*, intimating to us that riches are often accessary to their own ruin. Many times the greatness of a man's estate, and nothing else, hath been the cause of the loss of it, and of taking away the life of the owner thereof. The *fairness* of some mens fortune hath been a temptation to those who have been more powerful to *ravish* it from them, thus *riches make to themselves wings*. So that he that enjoys the greatest happiness of this world does still want one happiness more, to secure to him for the future what he possesses for the present. But the happiness of Heaven is a steady and constant light, fix'd and unchangeable as the fountain from whence it springs, *the father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning*.

And if the enjoyments of this life were certain, yet they are unsatisfying. This is the *vanity of vanities*, that every thing in this world can trouble us, but nothing can give us satisfaction. I know not how it is, but either we, or the things of this world, or both, are so phantastical, that we can neither be well with these things, nor well without them. If we be hungry, we are in pain; and if we eat to the full, we are uneasy. If we be poor we think our selves miserable, and when we come to be rich we commonly really are so. If we are in a low condition we fret and murmur, and if we chance to get up and to be rais'd to greatness we are many times farther from contentment than we were before. So that we pursue the happiness of this world just as little Children chase birds, when we think we are come very near it and have it almost in our hands it flies farther from us than it was at first.

Nay, so far are the enjoyments of this world from affording us satisfaction, that the sweetest of them are most apt to satiate and cloy us. All the pleasures of this world are so contriv'd as to yield us very little happiness. If they go off quickly they signify nothing, and if they stay long we are sick of them. After a full draught of any sensual pleasure we presently loath it, and hate it as much after the enjoyment as we courted it and long'd for it in the expectation. But the delights of the other world, as they will give us full satisfaction so we shall never be weary of them. Every repetition of them will be accompanied with a new pleasure and contentment. In the felicities of Heaven these two things shall be reconcil'd, which never met together in any sensual delight, long and full enjoyment, and yet a fresh and perpetual pleasure. As in God's *presence there is fulness of joy*, so *at his right hand there shall be pleasures for evermore.*

2. The happiness of the other life is not only incomparably beyond any happiness of this world (that, it may be, is no great commendation of

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it ; but it is very great in it ſelf. The happineſs of Heaven is uſually in Scripture deſcrib'd to us by ſuch pleaſures as are manly and excellent, chaſte and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refin'd than thoſe of ſenſe ; and if the Scripture at any time deſcend to the metaphors of a *feaſt*, and a *banquet*, and a *marriage*, it is plainly by way of accommodation to our weakneſs and condeſcention to our capacities.

But the chief ingredients of this happineſs, ſo far as the Scripture hath thought fit to reveal it to us, are the perfection of our knowledge, and the height of our love, and the perpetual ſociety and friendſhip of all the bleſſed inhabitants of thoſe glorious manſions ; and the joyful concurrence of all theſe in chearful expreſſions of gratitude, in the inceſſant praiſes and admiration of the fountain and author of all this happineſs. And what can be more delightful than to have our underſtandings entertain'd with a clear ſight of the beſt and moſt perfect Being, with the knowledge of all his works and of the wiſe deſigns of his providence here in the world ? than to live in the reviving preſence of God, and to be continually attending upon him whoſe favour is life, and whoſe glory is much more above that of any of the Princes of this world than the greateſt of them is above the pooreſt worm ? The Queen of *Sheba* thought *Solomon*'s Servants happy in having the opportunity by ſtanding continually before him to hear his wiſdom ; but in the other world it ſhall be a happineſs to *Solomon* himſelf, and to the wiſeſt and greateſt perſons that ever were in this world, to ſtand before this great King to admire his wiſdom and to behold his glory. Not that I imagine the happineſs of Heaven to conſiſt in a perpetual gazing upon God, and in an idle contemplation of the glories of that place. For as by that bleſſed ſight we ſhall be infinitely tranſported , ſo the Scripture tells us we ſhall be alſo transformed into the image of the divine perfections ; *we ſhall ſee God, and we ſhall be like him*, and what greater happineſs can there be than to be like the happieſt and moſt perfect Being in the world ? Beſides, who can tell what employment God may have for us in the next life ? We need not doubt but that he who is happineſs it ſelf, and hath promis'd to make us happy, can eaſily find out ſuch employments and delights for us in the other world as will be proper and ſuitable to that ſtate.

But then beſides the improvement of our knowledge there ſhall be the moſt delightful exerciſe of love. When we come to heaven we ſhall enter into the ſociety of the bleſſed Angels and of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, that is, freed from all thoſe paſſions and infirmities which do now render the converſation, even of the beſt men, ſometimes troubleſome to one another. We ſhall then meet with all thoſe excellent Perſons, thoſe brave Minds, thoſe innocent and charitable Souls whom we have ſeen, and heard, and read of in this world. There we ſhall meet with many of our dear relations and intimate friends, and perhaps with many of our enemies, to whom we ſhall then be perfectly reconcil'd notwithſtanding all the warm conteſts and peeviſh differences which we had with them in this world, even about matters of Religion. For Heaven is a ſtate of perfect love and friendſhip, there will be nothing but kindneſs and good nature there, and all the prudent Arts of endearment and wiſe ways of rendring converſation mutually pleaſant to one another. And what greater happineſs can be imagin'd than to converſe freely with ſo many excellent perſons, without any thing of folly or diſguiſe, of jealouſy or deſign upon one another ? For then there will be none of thoſe vices and paſſions, of covetouſneſs and ambition, of envy and hatred, of wrath and peeviſhneſs, which do now

ſo much ſpoil the pleaſure and diſturb the quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, ſchiſms and diviſions will then be effectually hinder'd, not by force but by love, not by compulſion but by that *charity which never fails*; and all thoſe controverſies in Religion which are now ſo hotly agitated will then be finally determin'd, not as we endeavour to end them now by Canons and Decrees, but by a perfect knowledge and convincing light.

And when this bleſſed ſociety is met together, and thus united by love, they ſhall all join in gratitude to their great Patrons and Benefactors, *to him that ſits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was ſlain, to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath lov'd us and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* And they ſhall ſing everlaſting ſongs of praiſe to God for all his works of wonder, for the effects of that infinite goodneſs, and admirable wiſdom, and almighty power, which are clearly ſeen in the creation and government of the world and of all the Creatures in it; particularly for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, for the comfort of their lives, and for all his merciful providences towards them in this world: But above all for the redemption of their ſouls by the death of his Son, for the free forgiveneſs of their ſins, for the gracious aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, and for conducting them ſafely through all the ſnares and dangers, the troubles and temptations of this world to the ſecure poſſeſſion of that glory and happineſs which then they ſhall be partakers of, and are bound to praiſe God for to all eternity. This, this ſhall be the employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above, and theſe are the chief ingredients of our happineſs which the Scripture mentions. And if there were no other, as there may be ten thouſand more for any thing I can tell, yet generous and virtuous minds will eaſily underſtand how great a pleaſure there is in the improvement of our knowledge, and the exerciſe of love, and in a grateful and perpetual acknowledgment of the greateſt benefits that creatures are capable of receiving.

3. This happineſs ſhall be eternal. And though this be but a circumſtance and do not enter into the nature of our happineſs, yet it is ſo material a one that all the felicities which heaven affords would be imperfect without it. It would ſtrangely damp and allay all our joys to think that they ſhould ſometime have an end. And the greater our happineſs were, the greater trouble it would be to us to conſider that it muſt have a period.

It would make a man ſorrowful indeed to think of leaving ſuch vaſt poſſeſſions. Indeed if the happineſs of heaven were ſuch as the joys of this world are, it were fit they ſhould be as ſhort; for after a little enjoyment it would cloy us, and we ſhould ſoon grow weary of it. But being ſo excellent, it would ſcarce be a happineſs if it were not eternal. It would imbitter the pleaſures of heaven, as great as they are, to ſee to an end of them, though it were at never ſo great a diſtance; to conſider that all this vaſt treaſure of happineſs would one day be exhauſted, and that after ſo many years were paſt we ſhould be as poor and miſerable again as we were once in this world. God hath ſo order'd things, that the vain and empty delights of this world ſhould be temporary and tranſient, but that the great and ſubſtantial pleaſures of the other world ſhould be as laſting as they are excellent. For Heaven as it is an *exceeding*, ſo it is *an eternal weight of glory*. And this is that which crowns the joys of heaven and baniſhes all fear and trouble from the minds of the bleſſed. And thus to be ſecur'd in the poſſeſſion of our happineſs is an unſpeakable addition to it. For that which is eternal as it ſhall never determine, ſo it can never be diminiſh'd;

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for to be diminiſh'd and to decay is to draw nearer to an end, and that which ſhall never have an end can never come nearer to it.

O vaſt *eternity!* how doſt thou ſwallow up our thoughts and entertain us at once with delight and amazement? This is the very top and higheſt pitch of our happineſs, upon which we may ſtand ſecure and look down with ſcorn upon all things here below; and how ſmall and inconſiderable do they appear to us, compar'd with the vaſt and endleſs enjoyments of our future ſtate? But oh vain and fooliſh ſouls! that are ſo little concern'd for eternity; that for the trifles of time, and *the pleaſures of ſin which are but for a ſeaſon*, can find in our hearts to forfeit an everlaſting felicity. Bleſſed God! why haſt thou prepar'd ſuch a happineſs for thoſe who neither conſider it, nor ſeek after it? *Why is* ſuch *a price put into the hands of fools, who have no heart to make uſe of it*; who fondly chuſe to gratify their luſts rather than to ſave their ſouls, and ſottiſhly prefer the temporary enjoyments of ſin before a bleſſed immortality?

4. And laſtly, This happineſs is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. It is ſo great, that it cannot now *enter into the heart of man*. We cannot from the experience of any of thoſe pleaſures and delights which we have been acquainted withal in this world frame an equal *Idea* and conception of it. So that when we come to Heaven we ſhall be ready to ſay of it as the Queen of *Sheba* did of *Solomon's* wiſdom and proſperity, that *half of it hath not been told us*; that the felicities and glories of that ſtate do far exceed all the fame which we heard of them in this world. For who can ſay how great a good God is? and how happy he who is the fountain of happineſs can make thoſe ſouls that love him, and thoſe whom he loves?

In this imperfect ſtate we are not capable of a full repreſentation of thoſe glories. *We cannot* now *ſee God and live*. A full deſcription of Heaven and of the pleaſures of that ſtate would let in joys upon us too big for our narrow capacities, and too ſtrong for weak mortality to bear. *We are now but Children, and we ſpeak as Children*, *and underſtand* and think *as Children* concerning theſe things; but in the other ſtate we ſhall grow up *to be men*, and then we ſhall *put away* theſe *childiſh* thoughts; *now we know but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect ſhall be done away*: *now we ſee through a glaſs darkly* (ἐν αἰνίγματι, *in a riddle*) *but then we ſhall ſee face to face*; *now we know in part, but then we ſhall know even as alſo we are known*, as the Apoſtle diſcourſeth excellently concerning this very matter. 1 Cor. 13. 9, 10, 11.

No ſooner ſhall we enter upon the joys of the other world, but our minds ſhall be rais'd to a ſtrength and activity as much above that of the moſt knowing perſons in this world as the thoughts of the greateſt Philoſopher and wiſeſt man upon earth are above the thoughts of a child or a fool. No man's mind is now ſo well fram'd to underſtand any thing in this world, as our underſtandings ſhall then be fitted for the knowledge of God and of the things that belong to that ſtate. In the mean time let us bleſs God that he hath reveal'd ſo much of this happineſs to us as is neceſſary to excite and encourage us to ſeek after it.

The *Second* thing to be conſider'd concerning our future happineſs, is the way and means whereby we may come to be made partakers of it. And that in ſhort is by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, in and through the mercies of God in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Chriſt indeed is the author of our ſalvation, but obedience is the condition of it; ſo

Heb. 5. 1. so the Apostle tells us, that Christ *is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.* It is *the grace of God* in the Gospel *which brings* or offers this *salvation* to us, but then it is by the *denying of ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and by *living soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world* that we are *to wait for the blessed hope.* Our Saviour promises this happiness to the pure in heart, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;* and elsewhere the Scripture doth exclude all others from any share or portion in this blessedness, so the Apostle assures us *that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

Tit. 2.11, 12.

Heb. 18. 14.

And holiness is not only a condition but a necessary qualification for the happiness of the next life. This is the force of St. *John's* reasoning, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him.* To *see God* is to be happy, but unless we be like him we cannot see him. The sight and presence of God himself would be no happiness to that man who is not like to God in the temper and disposition of his mind. And from hence the Apostle infers in the next *verse*, *every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.* So that if we live wicked lives, if we allow our selves in the practice of any known sin, we interrupt our hopes of Heaven and render our selves unfit for eternal life. By this means we defeat all the designs of God's grace and mercy towards us, and salvation it self cannot save us if we make our selves incapable of that happiness which God offers. Heaven is in Scripture call'd *an inheritance among them that are sanctified*, and *the inheritance of the Saints in light;* so that it is not enough that this *inheritance* is promis'd to us, but we must be qualified and prepar'd for it, and *be made meet to be made partakers of it.*

And this life is the time of our preparation for our future state. Our souls will continue for ever what we make them in this world. Such a temper and disposition of mind as a man carries with him out of this life he shall retain in the next. 'Tis true indeed, heaven perfects those holy and virtuous dispositions which are begun here; but the other world alters no man as to his main state, *he that is filthy will be filthy still*, and *he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous* still. If we do not in a good degree mortify our lusts and passions here, death will not kill them for us, but we shall carry them with us into the other world. And if God should admit us so qualified into the place of happiness, yet we shall bring that along with us which would infallibly hinder us from being happy. Our sensual inclinations and desires would meet with nothing there that would be suitable to them, and we should be perpetually tormented with those appetites which we brought with us out of this world, because we should find nothing there to gratify them withal. For as the Apostle says in another sense, *The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* The happiness of heaven consists in such things as a wicked man hath no gust and relish for. So that if a covetous, or ambitious, or voluptuous man were in Heaven, he would be just like the rich man in Hell, tormented with a continual thirst, and burnt up in the flames of his own ardent desires; and would not be able, amidst all the plenty and treasures of that place, to find so much as one drop of suitable pleasure and delight to quench and allay that heat. So likewise our fierce and unruly passions; if we should carry them with us into the other world, how inconsistent would they be with happiness? They would not only make us miserable our selves, but be a trouble to all those with whom we should converse. If a man of an envious and malicious, of a peevish and passionate temper, were admit-

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-ted into the mansions of the blessed, he would not only be unhappy himself, but would disturb the quiet of others, and raise storms even in those calm regions. Vain man! that dreamest of being happy without any disposition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we desire and to live with those whom we love. But there is nothing in heaven suitable to the desires and appetites of a wicked man. All the joys of that place, and the delights of that state are purely spiritual, and are only to be relish'd by those who have *purified themselves as God is pure.* But if thou be carnal and sensual, what are these things to thee? What happiness would it be to thee to see God, and to have him always in thy view who was never in all thy thoughts; to be tied to live for ever in his company who is of a quite contrary temper and disposition to thy self, whose presence thou dreadest, and whom whilst thou wast in this world thou couldst never endure to think upon? So that the pleasures of Heaven it self could signify no good or happiness to that man who is not so dispos'd as to take pleasure in them. Heaven is too pure an air for corrupt souls to live and breathe in, and the whole employment and conversation of that place, as it would be unsuitable, so would it also be unacceptable to a sensual and vicious person.

From all this it appears how necessary it is for us to prepare our selves for this blessed state, by the constant and sincere endeavours of a holy life, and by mortifying every lust and inordinate passion in our souls. For till this be done we are not meet to be made partakers of the felicities of the other world. And thus I have done with the *first* thing imply'd in this phrase *of having our conversation in heaven, viz.* the serious thoughts and considerations of heaven; or the happiness of that state, and of the way and means whereby that happiness is to be attained.

II. The *having our conversation in heaven* does imply likewise the effect which those considerations ought to have upon our hearts and lives: As

1. To convince us of the vanity of this world. God hath on purpose made this world troublesome and uneasy to us, that there might be no sufficient temptation to reasonable and considerate men to take them off from the care and thought of their future happiness; that God and heaven might have no rival here below; that there might be nothing in this world that might pretend to our affection or court us with any advantage in comparison of everlasting life and glory.

When we come to dye and eternity shall present it self to our serious and waking thoughts, then things will put on another face, and those things which we valued so much in this life will then appear to be nothing worth; but those things which we neglected, to be of infinite concernment to us, and worthy to have been the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we would consider these things in time, while the opportunities of life and health are before us, we might be convinc'd at a cheaper rate, and come to be satisfied of the vanity of this world before we despair'd of the happiness of the other.

2. To make us very active and industrious to be as good, and to do as much good as we can in this life, that so we may be qualified and dispos'd for the happiness of the next. Men are usually very industrious for the things of this life, to be rich and great in the world: Did we but value heaven half, as much as it deserves we should take infinitely more pains

for that. So often as we consider the glories that are above, how does it accuse our sloth and condemn our folly that we are less concerned for our souls than most men are for their bodies, that we will not labour half so much for an eternal inheritance as men ordinarily do for these corruptible things?

Let us remember that we are hasting apace to another world, and that our eternal happiness now lies at the stake. And how should it quicken our endeavours to have such a reward set before us, to have Crowns and Scepters in our eyes? would we but often represent to our minds the glorious things of another world, what fervors should we feel in our hearts? we should be all life, and spirit, and wing; and should do God's will, almost with the same readiness and delight, as the *Angels* do *who continually behold the face of their Father.* The consideration of heaven and the firm persuasion of our future happiness should actuate all the powers of our souls, and be continually inspiring us with new vigor in the ways of holiness and virtue. How should this thought swell our resolutions and confirm our purposes of obedience, that if we have our *fruit unto holiness* our *end will be everlasting life?*

3. To mitigate and lighten the evils and affliction of this life. It is no great matter how rough the way be provided we be sure that it leads to happiness. The incomparably greater good of the next life will to a wise and considerate man weigh down all the evils of this. And the Scripture tells us that there is no comparison between them. *The sufferings of this*
Rom.8.18. *present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* The evils of this life afflict men more or less according as the soul is fortified with considerations proper to support us under them. When we consider that we have but a little while to be here, that we are upon our journey travelling towards our heavenly Country where we shall meet with all the delights we can desire, it ought not to trouble us much to endure storms and foul ways, and to want many of those accommodations we might expect at home. This is the common fate of Travellers, and we must take things as we find them and not look to have every thing just to our mind. These difficulties and inconveniences will shortly be over, and after a few days will be quite forgotten, and be to us as if they had never been. And when we are safely landed in our own Countrey, with what pleasure shall we look back upon those rough and boisterous Seas which we have escap'd? The more troubles we have past through the kinder usage we shall find when we come to our Father's house. So the Apostle tells us, that *our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* When we come to heaven our happiness shall then be as real as our miseris were here upon earth, and far greater and more lasting. And what great matter is it tho' we suffer a while in this world, provided we escape the endless unsufferable torments of the next; though we have not our good things in this life, if infinitely greater be reserv'd for us, and we shall receive them with interest in the other?

Several of the evils and calamities of this life would be unsufferable indeed, if there were nothing better to be hoped for hereafter. If this were true, Christians would not only be of all *men* but of all *creatures the most miserable.* But our Religion hath abundantly assur'd us to the contrary. And the assurance of this was that which made the primitive Christians to embrace sufferings with so much cheerfulness, *to glory*

in tribulation, and *to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring substance.* The seven brethren in the History of the *Maccabees* upon this perswasion would *not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.* That storm of stones which was pour'd upon St. *Stephen* was no more to him than a common shower when *he saw the heavens open'd*, and *Jesus* (in whose cause he suffer'd) *standing on the right hand of God.*

4. To make us sincere in all our professions, words and actions. Did men firmly believe the rewards of another world their Religion would not be only in shew and pretence, but in life and reality, no man would put on a *form of godliness* that were destitute of *the power of it*; we should do nothing for the opinion of others, but all with regard to God and our own Consciences; and be as curious of our thoughts, and most retir'd actions, as if we were in an open theatre and in the presence of the greatest assembly. For in the next life men shall not be rewarded for what they seem'd to be, but for what they really were in this world. Therefore whatever we think, or speak, or do, we should always remember that the day of revelation is coming, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclos'd, when all disguises shall be laid aside, and every one's mask shall be taken off, and all our actions and designs shall be brought upon the publick stage and expos'd to the view of men and Angels. *There is nothing* now *hidden which shall not* then *be reveal'd, nor secret which shall not be made known.*

5. To arm us against the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the terror of it is infinitely increas'd by the fearful apprehensions of what may follow it. But the comfortable hopes of a blessed immortality do strangely relieve the fainting spirits of dying men, and are able to reconcile us to death, and in a great measure to take away the terror of it. I know that the thoughts of death are dismal even to good men, and we have never more need of comfort and encouragement than when we are conflicting with this last Enemy, and there is no such comfortable consideration to a dying man as the hopes of a happy eternity. He that looks upon death only as a passage to glory, may welcome the messengers of it as bringing him the best and most joyful news that ever came to him in his whole life; and no man can stay behind in this world with half the comfort that this man leaves it.

And now I have done with the *two* things implied in this phrase, of *having our conversation in heaven, viz.* the serious thoughts and considerations of heaven, and the effect of these thoughts and considerations upon our hearts and lives.

I crave your patience but a little longer, till I make some reflection upon what hath been deliver'd concerning the happiness of good men after this life. I have told you that it is incomparably beyond any happiness of this world, that it is great in it self, and eternal in its duration, and far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. And now after all this, I am very sensible how much all that I have said comes short of the greatness and dignity of the thing. So that I could almost begin again and make a new attempt upon this subject. And indeed who would not be loth to be taken off from so delightful an argument? Methinks 'tis good for us to be here, and to let our minds dwell upon these considerations. We are unworthy of heaven and unfit to partake of so great a glory, if we cannot take pleasure in the contemplation of those things now, the possession whereof shall be our happiness for ever.

With what joy then should we think of those *great and glorious things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him, of that inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, which fadeth not away, reserved for us in the heavens*? How should we welcome the thoughts of that happy hour when we shall make our escape out of these prisons, when we shall pass out of this *howling wilderness* into *the promis'd Land*; when we shall be remov'd from all the troubles and temptations of a wicked and ill-natur'd world; when we shall be past all storms, and secur'd from all further danger of shipwreck, and shall be safely landed in the regions of bliss and immortality?

O blessed time! *When all tears shall be wip'd from our eyes*, and *death and sorrow shall be no more*; When *mortality* shall *be swallowed up of life*, and we shall enter upon the possession of all that happiness and glory which God hath promis'd, and our faith hath believ'd, and our hopes have rais'd us to the expectation of; when we shall be eas'd of all our pains, and resolv'd of all our doubts, and be purg'd from all our sins, and be freed from all our fears, and be happy beyond all our hopes, and have all the happiness secur'd to us beyond the power of time and change: When we shall know God and other things without study, and love him and one another without measure, and serve and praise him without weariness, and obey his will without the least reluctancy; and shall still be more and more delighted in the knowing, and loving, and praising, and obeying of God to all eternity.

How should these thoughts affect our hearts, and what a mighty influence ought they to have upon our lives? The great disadvantage of the arguments fetch'd from another world is this, that those things are at a great distance from us, and not sensible to us; and therefore are not apt to affect us so strongly, and to work so powerfully upon us. Now to make amends for this disadvantage we should often revive these considerations upon our mind, and inculcate upon our selves the reality and certainty of these things together with the infinite weight and importance of them. We should reason thus with our selves; If good men shall be so unspeakably happy, and consequently wicked men so extremely miserable in another world: If these things be true and will one day be found to be so, why should they not be to me as if they were already present? why should not I be as much afraid to commit any sin as if hell were naked before me, and I saw the astonishing miseries of the damned? and why should I not be as careful to serve God and keep his commandments, as if heaven were open to my view, and I saw *Jesus* standing at the right hand of God with crowns of glory in his hand ready to be set upon the heads of all those who continue faithful to him?

The lively apprehensions of the nearness of death and eternity are apt to make mens thoughts more quick and piercing, and according as we think our selves prepar'd for our future state to transport us with joy, or to amaze us with horror. For the soul that is fully satisfied of his future bliss is already entred into heaven, has begun to take possession of glory, and has (as it were) his blessed Saviour in his arms, and may say with old *Simeon, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* But the thoughts of death must needs be very terrible to that man who is doubtful or despairing of his future condition. It would daunt the stoutest man that ever breathed, to look upon death when he can see nothing but hell beyond it. When the

the Apparition at *Endor* told *Saul*, *To morrow thou and thy Sons shall be with me*, these words struck him to the heart, so that *he fell down to the ground, and there was no more strength left in him.* It is as certain that we shall dye as if an express messenger should come to every one of us from the other world and tell us so. Why should we not then always live as those that must dye, and as those that hope to be happy after death? To have these apprehensions vigorous and lively upon our minds, this is *to have our conversation in heaven, from whence also we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.*

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Of the End of Judgments, and the Reason of their Continuance.

ISA. XIX. 12, 13.

For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still: For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.

IN the former part of this 12th *verse*, the *Prophet* threatens that *Israel* should be brought into great distress and set upon by Enemies on every side, *the Syrians before and the Philistines behind*, and that they should *devour Israel with open mouth*: And though this was like to be a very sore and dreadful judgment, yet he foretells that this would not stay God's hand nor satisfy his anger, because he foresaw that they would still grow worse and continue impenitent. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still: For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

In which words there are these two things very useful at all times, but at this time especially most proper and seasonable for our consideration.

1. *The design and intention of God in sending Judgments upon a People*; and that is *to reclaim them from their sins*, implied in these words, *For the People turneth not to him that smiteth them*; which intimate to us that this is the end which God aims at in his Judgments to take us off from our sins and to bring us to himself.

2. The reason of the continuance of God's Judgments, because the People were not reclaim'd by them. And this is fully express'd in the *Text*, that therefore *God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, because the People turneth not unto him that smiteth them*, &c.

Of these *Two* I crave leave to speak, as plainly and briefly as I can.

1. *The design and intention of God in sending Judgments upon a people*; and that is *to reclaim them from their sins.* This indeed is the intention of all God's dispensations towards us in this world. The end of all his mercies and benefits is to take us off from sin, and to oblige and win us to our duty: So the *Apostle* tells us, *Rom.* 2. 4. That the design of God's *goodness and long-suffering and forbearance towards us*, is, *to lead us to Repentance.*

And this is the way wherein God delights to deal with us. The way of Judgment and severity is that which he is more averse from, a course which he unwillingly takes with us and not without some difficulty and reluctancy. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men:* and were it not that we are such perverse Creatures as not to be wrought upon by kindness, so wild as not to be tamed by gentle usage, God would not handle us in

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any other way. It is our obstinacy and intractableness to the methods of his goodness which constraineth, and almost forceth him against his inclination, to take the Rod into his hand, and to chastise us with it. He would draw us with *the cords of Love* and *the bands of a man*, (as he expresseth himself in the *Prophet*) but we will not follow him: And therefore we provoke him to turn these cords into whips, and to change the gentle methods of his kindness into ways of harshness and severity.

And yet when he comes to take this course with us, he still like a kind and tender-hearted Father aims at our benefit and advantage. He designs kindness to the sons of men by all those Judgments which do not kill them and cut them off from the opportunity and possibility of improving them. If he sends evils upon us, it is that thereby he may do us some greater good: If he afflicts us, it is not because it is pleasant to him to deal harshly with us, but because it is profitable and necessary for us to be so dealt with: And if at any time he imbitter our lives by miseries and sufferings, it is because he is loath to see us perish in pleasant ways, and chuseth rather to be somewhat severe towards us than suffer us to be utterly undone.

This *Moses* declares to have been the great end of all the severe Providences of God towards the People of *Israel* in their long wandring in the Wilderness, and all the difficulties and hardships they were there exercised withal for the space of forty years, *Deut.* 8. 15, 16. *Who led thee through that great and terrible Wilderness, wherein were fiery Serpents and Scorpions,* &c. *That he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.*

So that the afflicting providences of God are not only apt in their own nature to do us good, but which is a more express argument of the Divine goodness, God intends and aims at this end by them: He does not send Judgments upon this Theatre of the World for his sport and pastime, nor set on one part of his Creation to bait another for his own diversion: He does not, like some of the cruel *Roman* Emperors, take pleasure to exercise men with dangers and to see them play bloody prizes before him.

Nay he does nothing that is severe out of humour and passion; as our earthly Parents many times do. Indeed he is angry with us for our sins, but yet so as still to pity our persons: And when his Providence makes use of any sharp and cutting instruments, it is with this merciful design, to let out our corruption: If he cast us into the Furnace of affliction, it is that he may refine and purify us from our dross.

So that though the Judgments of God be Evils in themselves, yet considering the intentions of God in them they are no real objections against his goodness, but rather arguments for it; as will appear if we consider these *three* things.

1. That the Judgments of God are proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind.

2. They are proper for the prevention of far greater Evils of the same kind.

3. They are not only proper to these Ends, but in many cases very necessary.

First, *The Judgments of God are very proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind*; I mean the *Evil of Sin.* We take wrong measures of things, when we judge those to be the greatest evils which afflict our bodies, wound our reputation, and impoverish our Estates. For those certainly are far the greatest, which affect our noblest part; which vitiate our understandings, and deprave our wills, and wound and defile our souls.

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What corrupt humours are to the body, that ſin is to the ſouls of men, their diſeaſe and their death.

Now it is very agreeable with the goodneſs and mercy of the Divine Providence, to adminiſter to us whatever is proper for the cure of ſo great an evil. If we make our ſelves ſick, that is our own folly, and no fault of the Phyſitian; but we are beholding to him if he recover us, though it be by very bitter and unpleaſing means. All temporal Judgments which are ſhort of Death, are properly Medicinal; and if we will but ſuffer them to have their kindly operation upon us, they will work a cure; and how grievous and diſtaſteful ſoever they may be for the preſent, they will prove mercies and bleſſings in the iſſue. Upon this account *David* reckons afflictions among the happy bleſſings of his life, *Pſal.* 119. 72. *It is good for me* (ſays he) *that I have been afflicted*; And he gives the reaſon of it in the ſame *Pſalm*, ver. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now I have learnt thy precepts.*

So that though all afflictions are Evils in themſelves, yet they are good for us, becauſe they diſcover to us our diſeaſe and tend to our cure. They are a ſenſible argument and conviction to us of the evil and danger of ſin. We are commonly ſuch *fools* as *Solomon* ſpeaks of, who *make a mock of ſin*; And like Children will be playing with the edge of it till it cut and wound us: We are not ſufficienly ſenſible how great an evil it is till we come to feel the diſmal effects and conſequences of it. And therefore to rectify our apprehenſions concerning it God makes us to ſuffer by it. Thus *Elihu* deſcribes to us the happy effect of afflictions upon ſinners, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10. *If they be bound in fetters and held in cords of affliction, then God ſheweth them their work and their tranſgreſſion that they have exceeded. He openeth alſo their ear to diſcipline and commandeth that they return from their iniquity.* God doth but invite and intreat us by his mercies, but his Judgments have a more powerful and commanding voice. *When he holds men in cords of affliction, then he openeth their ear to diſcipline.* In proſperity we are many times incapable of counſel and inſtruction: but when we are under God's correcting hand then are we fit to be ſpoken withal.

Secondly. The Judgments of God are likewiſe *proper for the preventing of far greater evils of the ſame kind*; I mean farther puniſhments. In ſending of temporal Judgments upon ſinners, God uſually proceeds with them by degrees. Firſt he lets fly ſeveral ſingle ſhots at them, and if upon theſe they will take warning and come in they may prevent the broad-ſides and volleys of his wrath.

But the great advantage of all is, that temporal Judgments may prove to us the opportunities of preventing the miſerable and unſpeakable torments of a long Eternity. For all Judgments which are not final, leaving men a ſpace of Repentance, have in them the mercy of a Reprieve, which by a ſerious and timely return to God may be improv'd into a Pardon.

Beſides, that adverſity and afflictions do uſually diſpoſe men, and put them into a fit temper for Repentance; They fix our minds and make us ſerious, and are apt to awaken us to conſideration, and ſuggeſt to us ſuch thoughts and meditations as theſe: If temporal evils be ſo grievous, how inſupportable then will be the extream and endleſs torments of the next life? If in this day of God's grace and patience we ſometimes meet with ſuch ſeverity, what may we not look for in the day of vengeance? If theſe drops of God's wrath which now and then fall upon ſinners in this world, fill them with ſo much anguiſh and affliction, how deplorably miſerable will thoſe wretches be upon whom the ſtorms of his fury ſhall fall? Who would

would venture to continue in ſin, when the greateſt miſeries and calamities which we feel in this life are but a ſmall and inconſiderable earneſt of thoſe woful wages which ſinners ſhall receive in the Day of Recompence?

Thirdly, The Judgments of God are *not only proper to theſe Ends, but in many caſes very neceſſary.* Our condition many times is ſuch as to require this ſevere way of proceeding, becauſe no other courſe that God hath taken, or can take with us, will probably do us good. God does not delight in the miſeries and calamities of his Creatures, but we put him upon theſe extremities, or rather his own goodneſs and wiſdom together do prompt and direct him to theſe harſh and rigorous ways. May be we have brought our ſelves into that dangerous ſtate, and the malignity of our diſtemper is ſuch that it is not to be remov'd without violent Phyſick, and that cannot be adminiſtred to us without making us deadly ſick.

So that the Judgments of God which are many times *abroad in the earth* are nothing elſe but the wiſe Methods which the great Phyſician of the World uſes for the cure of Mankind; They are the Rods of his School and the Diſcipline of his Providence, that *the inhabitants of the world may learn righteouſneſs*; They are a merciful invention of Heaven to do men that good which many times nothing elſe will, and to work that bleſſed effect upon us which neither the wiſe counſels and admonitions of God's Word, nor his milder and gentler dealings with us can uſually attain.

Thus we find in the *Parable*, Luke 15. that the Providence of God makes uſe of hunger and extreme neceſſity to bring home the *Prodigal*; and by him our Saviour repreſents to us the temper of moſt ſinners: For till we have ſpent that ſtock of mercies which God hath given us, till we come to be pinch'd with want and are *ready to periſh*, we are not apt to entertain thoughts of *returning to our Father.*

It may be there are ſome ſinners which are more tractable and eaſy to be reduced to goodneſs, that are not ſo headſtrong and obſtinate in their way but that they may be reclaimed by milder and ſofter means: But there are likewiſe a great many ſenſleſs and outragious ſinners, who are madly and furiouſly bent upon their own ruin: Now to treat theſe fairly, with the allurements of kindneſs and the gentle arts of perſuaſion, would be to no purpoſe: The only way that is left of dealing with them, is rigour and ſeverity. When ſinners are thus beſides themſelves, ſomething that looks like Cruelty is perhaps the greateſt mercy that can be ſhown to them; nothing ſo proper for ſuch perſons as a dark Room, and a ſpare Diet, and ſevere Uſage; *A rod for the back of fools*; as the the *Wiſe-man* ſpeaks.

Thus have I done with the *firſt* thing I propounded to ſpeak to, namely *The merciful deſign and intention of God in ſending Judgments upon a People*, which is to bring them to Repentance, and by Repentance to prevent their Ruin. I proceed to the

II. *The Reaſon of the continuance of God's Judgments*, becauſe the People were not reclaimed by them; therefore *his anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill*, becauſe *the people turneth not to him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of Hoſts.*

And how can it be expected it ſhould be otherwiſe, when incorrigibleneſs under the Judgments of God is a provocation of ſo high a nature, a ſign of a moſt deprav'd and incorrigible temper, and an argument of the greateſt obſtinacy in evil? Upon this account we find that the Holy Spirit of God in *Scripture* brands *Ahaz* as a ſingular and remarkable ſort of ſinner, (2 *Chron.* 28. 22.) becauſe *in the time of his diſtreſs he ſinned yet more*

against the Lord. The longer *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* resisted the Judgments of God the more still they were harden'd, and the more they were plagu'd: *Lev.* 26. 22. after God had there threatned his people with several sore Judgments for their sins, he tells them, that if they *will not be reform'd by all these things* he will *punish them seven times more,* and after that *seven times more for their sins*: And if in such a case the just God will punish seven times more, we may safely conclude that sins after Judgments are seven times greater.

So likewise *Deut.* 28. after a long and dreadful Catalogue of Curses there denounc'd against the People of *Israel* in case of their disobedience, God at last threatens them with a Foreign *Enemy* that should *distress them in their gates*; And if they would not be reclaim'd by all this, he tells them, that he hath still more and greater Judgments for them in store, *v.* 58, & 59. *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that thou mayest fear this great and glorious Name,* THE LORD THY GOD, *then the Lord will make thy Plagues wonderful.* If we be of so strange and monstrous a disposition as to grow worse under Judgments, God will deal with us after an unusual and grodigious manner, he will make our *plagues wonderful.*

This incorrigible temper the *Prophets* of old every where make the great aggravation of the sin of *Israel,* Isa. 1. 4, 5. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity*; and after a great many other expressions to set forth what heinous sinners they were, he sums up all in this, That they were so far from being reform'd by the several Judgments of God which had been inflicted upon them, that they were the worse for correction; *Why should they be stricken any more: they will revolt more and more.* So likewise, *Hos.* 7. 9, 10, *Ephrahim,* though brought very low, is represented as of the same refractory temper, *Strangers have devour'd his strength,* &c. *But they do not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this.* I will mention but one *Text* more (and methinks it bears but too near a resemblance with our own condition, both in respect of the Judgments which have been upon us, and our carriage under them) *Amos* 4. where God upbraids his people several times with this as the great aggravation of their sins, That they continued impenitent under all those terrible Judgments of God which had been upon them; *I have sent among you* (says he) *Famine,* and then *Pestilence,* and then the *Sword,* and last of all a terrible *Fire* which had almost utterly consumed them, *verse* 11. *I have overthrown some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand pluck'd out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me.* And because all these Judgments had not been effectual to reclaim them, He tells them that he was resolved to go on in punishing; and therefore he bids them to expect it and prepare themselves for it, *v.* 12. *Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* When God hath begun to punish a people and they are not amended by it, the honour of his Justice is concerned to proceed, and not to give over. By every sin that we commit we offend God, but if he smite us, and we stand out against him, then do we contend with him and strive for mastery. And when the sinner is upon these stubborn and insolent terms, then *prepare to meet thy God*; A bitter *Sarcasm,* as if man could be a match for God, and a poor weak creature in any wise able to encounter him to whom Power belongs. There's a severe expression concerning God's dealing with such perverse and obstinate sinners, *Psalm* 18. 26. *With the froward thou wilt shew thy self froward,* or, as the words may more properly and conveniently be rendred, *with the froward, thou wilt wrestle.* God will not be outbrav'd by the sins of men, and therefore if we

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continue impenitent we have all the reason in the world to expect that God will go on to punish.

But to come nearer to our selves and to consider our own case, which is in truth so very bad that we may almost be afraid to consider it. The wise and good God, like a prudent and indulgent Father, hath used all the arts of his providence towards this Nation to reclaim us. He hath invited us to him by many blessings, but we would not come; so (to borrow an apt illustration from a great Divine of our own) we have forced him to deal with us as *Absalom* did with *Joab*; he sent one civil message to him after another, but he would not come; at last he sets on fire his corn-field to try whether that would bring him: This course God hath taken with us, we would not be perswaded by messages of kindness (by his many blessings and favours) to return to him, and therefore hath he sent amongst us the terrible messengers of his wrath. First we were engag'd in a *Foreign War*, and tho' God was pleas'd to give us some considerable success in it, yet it seems our provocations were so great that he was resolv'd to punish us. He was loth to let us *fall into the hands of men*, and therefore he took the work into his own hand, and punish'd us himself, by sending a *Pestilence* amongst us, the sorest and most destructive that hath befallen this Nation for many Ages. But we did not upon this, return to him, and therefore his fierce anger kindled a fearful *Fire* amongst us, which hath laid the honour of our Nation, one of the greatest and richest Cities in the World in the dust; and that by so sudden and irresistible, so dismal and amazing a devastation, as in all the circumstances of it is scarce to be parallel'd in any History. Bishop Saunderson.

I doubt not but most of us were mightily affected with this Judgment whilst it was upon us. So astonishing a calamity could not but make us open our eyes a little, and awaken us to consideration; Even the *rich man* in the *Gospel*, though he had all his life-time been immers'd in sensuality, yet could not but *lift up his eyes when he was in flames.*

And surely God expects that such Judgments as these should not only rouze us a little for the present, but that they should have a permanent operation and effect upon us, and work a thorough and lasting reformation amongst us; but yet I am afraid that this dreadful Fire hath had no other influence upon us but what it uses to have upon Metals, which are only melted by it for the present, but when the Fire is removed they suddenly cool and return to their former hardness.

One would have thought that the sense of such a calamity as this should have remain'd longer upon us. Methinks God seem'd to say to us after this Judgment as he did once to *Jerusalem*, Zeph. 3. 7. *Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction*; but we (like them) have been but the more forward to provoke him,(*they rose early and corrupted their doings*) we have after all this, *harden'd our hearts from his fear and refused to return.* And therefore God is now come to one of his last Judgments, *Our Enemy distresseth us in our Gates.* God hath begun to *let us fall into the hands of men*, and by giving our enemies a sudden and fatal advantage upon us, had smitten us with *a Breach great as the Sea.*

These were terrible calamities indeed to come so thick and so swiftly upon us, *like desolation, and as a Whirlwind.* Such a quick succession of Judgments, treading almost upon one anothers heels, does but too plainly declare that God is highly incens'd against us. For surely these are not the wounds of a Friend, but the terrible assaults of an Enemy. They do not look like the displeasure of a Father, but the severity of a Judge, not like *visitation*, but like *vengeance.*

And besides these more visible Judgments upon the Nation, we are by a secret curse of God insensibly decayed in our riches and strength. We are, I know not how, strangely impoverish'd in the midst of plenty, and almost undone by victories. And which adds to our misery, few among us seem to be sufficiently sensible of it, or to take any notice by what silent steps and imperceptible degrees (like gray hairs and the infirmities of old age) poverty and weakness are stealing in upon us: so that we may fitly apply to our selves what the Prophet says of *Ephraim*, *Hos.* 7. 9. *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea grey hairs are here and there upon him, and yet he knoweth it not.*

And our condition as we are a Church, is not much better. How is this famous *Protestant Church* of ours, which was once the *Admiration* of her Friends and the envy of her Enemies, sunk and declin'd in her glory, and reduc'd into a very narrow compass? So that she is *left* like *the Daughter of Sion*, (Isa. 1. 8.) *as a Cottage in a Vineyard, as a Lodge in a Garden of Cucumbers, as a besieged City:* straitned and hemm'd in on all parts, by the impudence of *Atheism*, the insolencies of *Popery*, and the turbulency of *Faction*; all which do every day visibly and apace gain ground upon her, and distress her on every side; just as the condition of the *Jewish* Church is described before my Text, *The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind, both ready to devour Israel with open mouth.*

And surely it is not for nothing that God hath brought us thus low, that he hath sent all these Judgments upon us, and that he doth still threaten us with more: The reason is plain, because we are still impenitent; *The people turned not to him that smiteth them.* There hath been almost an universal degeneracy amongst us, and there is still, I fear, a general impenitency, *the people turneth not*, &c. Notwithstanding all those dismal Calamities which our eyes have seen, wickedness doth still prevail in the Nation and overflows it like a mighty Deluge, so as to overspread all ranks and orders of men: And not only so, but is grown impudent and appears *with a whores forehead*; all kind of modesty seems to have forsaken the sinners of this Age.

And is this Repentance? to live in filthy and abominable lusts, to tear the Name of God by horrid Oaths and Imprecations; to be Atheistical and prophane, and by an unexampled boldness to turn the *Word of God* it self and the gravest and most serious matters of Religion into *Raillery*? This is not *to turn to him that smiteth us*, but to turn upon him and smite him again. And yet such crying and clamorous sins as these are almost come to be the garb and fashion of the Nation, and to be accounted the wit and gallantry of the Age.

And *shall not God visit for these things? shall not his soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* Yes, he hath visited; and 'tis for these things that *the wrath of God* hath been so manifesty *revealed from Heaven* against us. For this cause *misery and destruction* have been *in our way, and the way of peace have we not known*, because there hath been *no fear of God before our eyes.* Hence it is that *God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, because the people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

But do not we *seek God?* Do we not every day acknowledge our sins to him, and pray that he would *have mercy upon us miserable offenders*, and *grant that we may hereafter live godly, righteous, and sober lives?* Do not we *seek the Lord of Hosts*, when we continually beg of him to

save

ſave and *deliver us from the hand of our enemies?* Indeed we do thus *ſeek* him, but we ſhould firſt *turn to him*; otherwiſe if we hope our prayers will prevail with God to do us good we do but *truſt in lying words.* If we go on in our ſins our very prayers will *become ſin*, and encreaſe our guilt: For *the prayer of the wicked* (that is, of one that is reſolved to continue ſo) *is an abomination to the Lord.* Can we think it reaſonable for men to addreſs themſelves to God after this manner? *Lord, though we have no mind to turn to thee, yet we pray thee turn away thine anger from us; though we are reſolved not to forſake our ſins, yet we make no doubt but that thy mercy will forgive them; give peace in our time, O Lord, that we may purſue our luſts ſecurely and without diſturbance: Deliver us we pray thee from the hands of our Enemies, that we may ſin againſt thee without fear all the days of our lives.* Would it not be horrible impudence and impiety to put up any ſuch petitions to God? And yet this, I fear, is the moſt genuine interpretation of our prayers and lives compar'd together.

And if this be our caſe, what can we expect? God may give us peace with our Enemies, but then he will find out ſome other way to puniſh us: For if we ſtill perſiſt in our Atheiſm and Prophaneneſs, in our contempt of God and of his holy Worſhip, in our ſcorn and deriſion of Religion, in our abominable luſts and horrid impieties, what can we look for but that God ſhould *be angry with us until he have conſumed us and there be no eſcaping?* Nothing can be a ſadder preſage of our ruin, than not to be reformed by thoſe dreadful Judgments of God which have been upon us. This was that which brought final deſtruction upon the *Egyptians* in the *Red Sea*, that they had held out ſo obſtinately againſt ſo many Judgments, and had been *hardened under ten Plagues.* To be impenitent after ſuch ſevere corrections, is to poyſon our ſelves with that which is intended for our Phyſick, and by a *miraculous* kind of obſtinacy to turn the *Rods* of God into *Serpents.*

And now perhaps ſome will be apt to ſay, That theſe are things fit for men of our *Profeſſion*, becauſe it is our Trade and we live by it. Indeed they are ſo, things very fit to be ſaid, and withal very fit for every one to conſider, who profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian, and who owns the belief of a God, and a Providence, and another World. And if they be ſo, where is the fault? Is it, that there is a peculiar Profeſſion of men whoſe proper work it is to tell men of their faults, and to perſwade them to reform? No, there is no harm in that neither. Is it then that they live by their Profeſſion, and yet would be believed? Yes, there lies the force of the objection. To which I ſhall only at preſent return this anſwer, That men do not argue thus in other caſes, when yet the reaſon ſeems to be the very ſame. In matters that concern their *Bodies* and *Eſtates*, the *Phyſician* and the *Lawyer* are believed, though it is verily thought that they live by their Profeſſions, as well as we; why then ſhould men deal ſo partially and unequally only with their *Souls?* were we not moved by better principles, and ſwayed by the arguments and conſiderations of another world, we might, for ought we know, with every whit as much advantage to our ſelves ſuffer men to be quiet and to ſleep on ſecurely in their ſins; If we did not believe our ſelves in theſe matters, what ſhould hinder but that we might with as much gravity and confidence cry Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace; and flatter men with as much art and with

as good a grace, as any of those can do who *live delicately and wear soft cloathing?*

But *we believe* the threatnings of God, and *therefore do we speak: We know the terror* of the Lord, and therefore we endeavour to *perswade men.* And Oh! that we could perswade them to *break off their sins by righteousness*, and to *turn every one from the evil of his way, and from the violence that is in his hands:* And then *who can tell but God may turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?*

The good God make us all wise to know in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes; and grant that we may all turn to him that hath smitten us, by Repentance and real Reformation of our lives; that God may be pleased to turn away his Anger from us, and to stretch out his hand for our Deliverance; which we humbly beg of him for the sake of Christ. To whom with the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Of the Deceitfulness and Danger of Sin.

HEB. III. 13.

Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.

AMong the many considerations which the Word of God and our own Reason offer to us to discourage us from sin this is none of the least considerable, that he that once engages in a vicious course is in danger to proceed in it, being insensibly trained on from one degree of wickedness to another; so that the farther he advances, his retreat grows more difficult, because he is still pushed on with a greater violence. All error, as well of practice as of judgment is endless; and when a man is once out of the way, the farther he shall go on the harder he will find it to return into the right way. Therefore there is great reason why men should be so often cautioned against the beginnings of sin; or if they have been so unhappy as to be engaged in a bad course, why they should be warned to break it off presently and without delay, lest by degrees they be hardned in their wickedness, till their case grow desperate and past remedy. And to this purpose is the *Apostle*'s advice here in the *Text*, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.*

From which words I shall

1. Endeavour to represent to you the growing danger of sin, and by what steps and degrees bad habits do insensibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil course.

2. I shall from this consideration take occasion to shew what great reason and need there is to warn men of this danger, and to endeavour to rescue them out of it. And then

3. I shall apply my self to the duty here in the Text, of *exhorting* men with all earnestness and importunity to resist the beginnings of sin; or if they be already entred upon a wicked course, to make hast out of this dangerous state; *lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.*

I. *First*, I shall endeavour to represent to you the growing danger of sin, and by what steps and degrees bad habits do insensibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil course. All the actions of men which are not natural, but proceed from deliberation and choice have something of difficulty in them when we begin to practise them, because at first we are rude and unexercised in that way: but after we have practised them awhile they become more easy: and when thy are easy, we begin to take pleasure in them: and when they please us we do them frequently, and think

we cannot repeat them too often; and by frequency of Acts a thing grows into a habit: and a confirm'd habit is a ſecond kind of nature: and ſo far as any thing is natural ſo far it is neceſſary, and we can hardly do otherwiſe; nay, we do it many times when we do not think of it. For by virtue of a habit a man's mind or body becomes pliable and inclined to ſuch kind of actions as it is accuſtomed to, and does as it were ſtand bent and charged ſuch a way; ſo that being touched and awakened by the leaſt occaſion, it breaks forth into ſuch or ſuch actions. And this is the natural progreſs of all habits indifferently conſidered, whether they be good or bad.

But vicious habits have a greater advantage, and are of a quicker growth. For the corrupt nature of man is a rank ſoil to which vice takes eaſily, and wherein it thrives apace. The mind of man hath need to be prepared for piety and virtue; it muſt be cultivated to that end, and ordered with great care and pains: But vices are weeds that grow wild and ſpring up of themſelves. They are in ſome ſort natural to the Soil, and therefore they need not to be planted and watered, 'tis ſufficient if they be neglected and let alone. So that vice having this advantage from our nature, it is no wonder if occaſion and temptation eaſily draw it forth.

But that we may take a more diſtinct account of the progreſs of ſin and by what ſteps vice gains upon men, I ſhall mark out to you ſome of the chief and more obſervable gradations of it.

1. Men begin with leſſer ſins. No man is perfectly wicked on the ſudden. *Sunt quædam vitiorum elementa; there are certain rudiments of vice,* in which men are firſt entred, and then they proceed by degrees to greater and fouler crimes. For ſin hath its infancy and tender age, and its ſeveral ſtates of growth. Men are not ſo totally degenerate but at firſt they are aſhamed when they venture upon a known ſin, though it be but ſmall in compariſon. Hence it is that at firſt men are very ſolicitous to palliate and hide their faults by excuſes, but after they have frequently committed them, and they grow too viſible to be concealed, then they will attempt to defend and maintain them; and from thence they come by degrees to take pleaſure in them, and in thoſe that do the ſame things.

Sen.

2. After men have been ſome time initiated in theſe leſſer ſins, by the commiſſion of theſe they are prepared and diſpoſed for greater; ſuch as lay waſte the conſcience, and offer more violence to the light and reaſon of their minds. By degrees a ſinner may grow to be ſo hardy as to attempt thoſe crimes which at firſt he could not have had the thought of committing without horror. Like *Hazael,* who when he was told by the Prophet *Eliſha* what barbarous cruelties he ſhould one day be guilty of towards the People of *Iſrael* when he ſhould come to be King of *Syria,* he abominated the very thought and mention of them; *Is thy ſervant a dog that he ſhould do this great thing?* and yet for all this we know he did it afterwards. 'Tis true indeed when a ſinner is firſt tempted to the commiſſion of a more groſs and notorious ſin, his conſcience is apt to boggel and ſtart at it, he doth it with great difficulty and regret; the terrors of his own mind and the fears of damnation are very troubleſome to him; But this trouble wears off by degrees, and that which was at firſt difficult does by frequent practice and long cuſtom become tolerable.

3. When a man hath proceeded thus far he begins to put off ſhame, one of the greateſt reſtraints from ſin which God hath laid upon humane nature And when this curb once falls off, there is then but little left to reſtrain and hold us in. At firſt ſetting out upon a vicious courſe men are a little nice and delicate, like young Travellers, who at firſt are offended at every ſpeck of

dirt

dirt that lights upon them; but after they had been accustomed to it, and have travell'd a good while in foul ways, it ceaseth to be troublesome to them to be dash'd and bespatter'd.

4. After this, it is possible, men may come to approve their vices. For if mens Judgments do not command their wills and restrain their lusts, it is great odds in process of time the vicious inclinations of their Wills will put a false byass upon their Judgments; And then it is no wonder if men come to boast of their sins and to glory in their vices, when they are half perswaded that they are generous and commendable qualities. Thus much is certain in experience, that some men have gotten so perfect a habit of some sins as not to know and take notice many times when they commit them. As in the case of swearing, which some men have so accustomed themselves to, that without any consideration they do of course put an oath or two into every sentence that comes from them. And it hath been observed of some persons that they have told an untruth so often, and averr'd it with so much confidence, till at last, forgetting that it was a lye at first, they themselves have in process of time believed it to be true.

5. From this pitch of wickedness men commonly proceed to draw in others and to make Proselytes to their vices. Now this signifies not only a great approbation of sin but even a fondness for it, when men are not content to sin upon their own single accounts, but they must turn zealous agents and factors for the Devil; become *teachers* of sin and *ministers of unrighteousness*, and are factiously concerned to propagate together with their Atheistical principles their lewd practices, and to draw Followers and Disciples after them.

And when they are arrived to this height it is natural for them to hate reproof, and to resist the means of their recovery; to quarrel against all the remedies that shall be offer'd to them, and to count those their greatest enemies who have so much courage and kindness as to deal plainly with them, and to tell them the truth. And then all the wise counsels of God's Word, and the most gentle and prudent admonitions in the world, when they are tendered to such persons, serve only to provoke their scorn or their passion. And surely that man is in a sad case that is so disposed, that in all probability he will turn the most effectual means of his amendment into the occasion of new and greater sins.

But that which renders the condition of such persons much more sad and deplorable is, that all this while God is withdrawing his grace from them. For every degree of sin causeth the Holy Spirit of God with all his blessed motions and assistances to retire farther from them: And not only so, but the Devil (that evil *Spirit* which the *Scripture* tells us, *works effectually in the childeren of disobedience*) does according as men improve in wickedness get a greater and a more establish'd dominion over them. For as they who are reclaimed from an evil course are said in Scripture to be *rescued out of the snare of the Devil*, and to be *turned from the power of Satan unto God*; so on the other hand, the farther men advance in the ways of sin so much the farther they depart from God, from under the influence of his grace, and the care of his protection and providence; and they give the Devil (who is not apt to neglect his advantages upon them) greater opportunities every day to gain the firmer possession of them.

And thus by passing from one degree of sin to another, the sinner becomes harden'd in his wickedness and does insensibly slide into that in which without a miraculous grace of God he is like for ever to continue. For the mind of man after it hath been long accustomed to evil, and is once grown

old in vice, is almost as hard to be rectified as it is to recover a body bowed down with age to its first straightness. The *Scripture* speaks of some that *commit sin with greediness*, and *that drink up iniquity as the Ox drinketh up water*, with a mighty appetite and thirst, as if they were not able to refrain from it. And to express to us the miserable condition of such persons it representeth them as perfect slaves to their vices, that have *sold* themselves to do wickedness, and *are led captive by Satan at his pleasure.* And when men have brought themselves to this pass, they are almost under a fatal necessity of sinning on. I do not believe that God hath absolutely predestinated any man to ruin, but by a long course of wilful sins men may in a sort predestinate themselves to it, and chuse wickedness so long till it almost becomes necessary, and till they have brought themselves under all imaginable disadvantage of contributing any thing towards their own recovery; being bound in the chains of their own wickedness and held in the cords of their sins: Nay like *Sampson*, not only bound by those lusts which they have embraced, but likewise robbed of all their strength whereby they should break loose from those bonds. God grant that none of us may ever have the woful experience of it: but I am horribly afraid it is too true, that a sinner may arrive to that confirm'd state of impiety as almost totally to lose his liberty to do better: He may attain to that perfection in vice, as to continue to be a bad man upon the same account that the *Historian* extravagantly says *Cato* was virtuous, *Quia aliter esse non potuit*; *because he could not be otherwise.* *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots?* It is the *Scripture* comparison, to set forth to us how hard a thing it is for a man to be brought to goodness that hath been long accustomed to do evil. He that is thus deeply engaged and entangled in a bad course will scarce ever have the heart and resolution to break loose from it unless he be forced violently out of it by some severe affliction, by a sharp sickness, or by a terrible calamity, or by the present apprehensions of death and the terrors of a future Judgment. Nor will these be effectual neither to change such a person, without an extraordinary degree of God's grace; which considering the greatness and the continuance of his provocations, he hath very little reason to expect or hope God should ever bestow upon him. Wretched man! that hast brought thy self into this miserable state, out of which there is but just a possibility left of thy being rescued; that hast neglected thy disease so long till it is almost too late to apply remedies; that hast provoked God so far and sinned to such a prodigeous height, that thou hast reason almost to despair both of his grace and assistance for thy repentance, and of his mercy for thy pardon. I speak not this to discourage even the greatest of sinners from repentance. Though their case be extremely difficult, yet it is not quite desperate. *For those things which seem impossible with men, are possible with God.* But I speak it on purpose to stop sinners in their course and to discourage men from going on in sin till they be hardned through the deceitfulness of it, and have brought themselves by insensible degrees into that dangerous and difficult state which I have all this while been representing to you. I come now to the

Vel. Pater.

II. *Second* thing I propounded, which was from this consideration to shew what great reason and need there is to warn men of this danger, and to endeavour to rescue them out of it. The *Apostle* directs this precept to all Christians, *Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.* That is, lest you be hardned by degrees and finally ruined. And surely every man is concern'd to do what in him lies to rescue his brother

ther from so imminent a danger. It is every ones place and duty to endeavour to save those whom he sees ready to perish: Much more does it concern those who are peculiarly set apart for this work, I mean the Ministers of God's holy Word, whose proper office and business it is to *exhort* and *warn every man day and night*, who are *set as watchmen to the house of Israel*, and *whose blood* in case any of them miscarry through our neglect *shall be required at our hands.* So that if we believe the threatnings of God which we declare to others, if we have any apprehension of the dreadful misery of another world, if we have any sense of our own duty and safety, if we have any pity for perishing Souls, we cannot but be very importunate with sinners to look about them, and to consider their danger, and to bethink themselves seriously of the miserable event and issue of a wicked life: We cannot but be earnest with them to *break off their sins, and to give glory to God by repentance, before darkness come and their feet stumble upon the dark mountains.* When we are convinced more fully than we can desire, that *misery and destruction are in their ways,* when we plainly see the *evil day* hasting towards them apace, and *destruction coming upon them like a Whirlwind*; heaven above threatning them, and *hell beneath moving her self to meet them at their coming,* can we possibly do less than to warn such persons *to flee from the wrath which is to come,* and out of a sad apprehension of the danger that hangs over them, to caution them against it, and endeavour with all our might to rescue them from the misery which is ready to swallow them up? Indeed one would be apt to think it a very vain thing to disswade men from being miserable, to use great vehemency of argument to hinder a man from leaping into a pit, or from running into the fire; to take great pains to argue a sick man into a desire of health, and to make a prisoner contented to have his shackels knock'd off, and to be set at liberty: one would think all this were perfectly needless: But yet we see in experience sin is a thing of so stupifying a nature as to make men insensible of their danger, although it be so near, and so terrible. It is not so with men in other cases: When we labour of any bodily distemper, it is much to find a man that is patient of his disease; but when our souls are mortally sick, that we should be contented with our condition, and fond of our disease, that we should fight with our Physician, and spurn at our remedy; this surely is the height of distraction, for men to be thus absolutely bent upon their own ruin, and to resolve to make away themselves for ever. And we who are the Messengers of God to men must be born of the rocks, and have hearts *harder than the nether milstone,* if we can patiently look on and endure to see men perish without using our utmost endeavour to save them. Therefore I shall in the

III. *Third* and *last* place apply my self to this work of *Exhortation,* the duty commanded here in the text. And here I shall address my self to *two* sorts of persons:

1. To perswade those who are yet innocent of great crimes to resist the beginnings of sin, lest it gain upon them by degrees.

2. To press and urge those that are already entred upon a wicked course, that they would make haste out of this dangerous state; *lest* at last *they be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.*

1. To perswade those who are yet in some measure innocent, to resist the beginnings of sin, lest it gain upon them by degrees. Vice may easily be discouraged at first. 'Tis like a slight disease, when it is easy to be cured, but

dangerous to be neglected. The first approaches of sin and temptation are usually very modest, but if they be not discountenanced they will soon grow upon us and make bolder attempts. Every inclination to sin, every compliance with temptation is a going down the hill: While we keep our standing we may command our selves, but if we once put our selves into violent motion downward we cannot stop when we please.

Omne in præcipiti vitium stetit——

All Vice stands upon a Precipice, and to engage in any sinful course is to run down the hill. And if we once let loose the Propensions of our Nature we cannot gather in the reins and govern them as we please: If we give way to *presumptuous sins* they will quickly get *dominion over us*. It is much easier not to begin a bad course than to put a stop to our selves after we have begun it.
Seneca. *Stulta res est nequitiæ modus*, 'Tis a fond thing for a man to think to set bounds to himself in any thing that is bad, to resolve to sin in number, weight and measure, with great temperance and discretion, and government of himself: that he will commit this sin and then give over, entertain but this one temptation, and after that he will shut the door and admit of no more. Our corrupt hearts when they are once in motion, they are like the raging Sea, to which we can set no bounds, nor say to it, *Hitherto thou shalt go and no further*. Sin is very cunning and deceitful, and does strangely gain upon men when they once give way to it. It is of a very bewitching nature, and hath strange arts of address and insinuation. The giving the way to a small sin does marvellously prepare and dispose a man for a greater. By giving way to one little vice after another the strongest resolution may be broken. For tho' it be not to be snapt in sunder at once, yet by this means it is untwisted by degrees, and then 'tis easy to break it one thread after another. 'Tis scarce imaginable of what force one sinful action is to produce more: For sin is very teeming and fruitful; and tho' there be no *blessing* annex'd to it, yet it does strangely *increase and multiply*. As there is a connection of one virtue with another, so vices are link'd together, and one sin draws many after it. When the Devil tempts a man to commit any wickedness he does as it were lay a long train of sins, and if the first temptation take, they give fire to one another. Let us then resist the beginnings of sin, because then we have most power, and sin hath least. This is the *first*.

2. To persuade those who are already engaged in a wicked course, to make hast out of this dangerous state. And there is no other way to get out of it but by repentance, that is, by a real change and reformation of our lives; for herein the nature of true repentance does consist. And without this all the devices which men use to get rid of the guilt of their sins are vain and to no purpose. 'Tis not to be done by a formal confession and absolution, nor by a long pilgrimage, nor by one of those little Tickets from *Rome* which they call *Indulgences*. A wise man would much sooner persuade himself that God will not at all punish the sins of men, than that he would forgive them so easily, and receive great offenders to favour upon such slight terms. Let us not deceive our selves, there is one plain way to Heaven, by sincere repentance and a holy life, and there is no getting thither by tricks. And without this change of our lives all our sorrow and fasting and humiliation for sin, which at this season we make profession of, will signify nothing. There is an excellent passage of the Son of *Sirach* to this purpose, Ecclus. 34. 25, 26. *He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again what availeth his washing? So is it with a man that fasteth*

for

for his sins, and goeth again and doth the same things, who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him? There is this plain difference between trouble for sin and Repentance; sorrow only respects sins past, but repentance is chiefly preventive of sins for the future: And God therefore requires that we should be troubled for our sins, that we may resolve to leave them.

And to oblige us to a vigorous and speedy resolution in this matter, let us consider that we have engaged too far already in a bad course; and that every day our retreat will grow more dangerous and difficult; that by our delays we make work for a sadder and longer repentance than that which we do now so studiously decline: Let us consider likewise, that our life is concerned in the case; that *except we repent and turn, we shall dye*: And that the evil day may overtake us while we are deliberating whether we should avoid it or not; that vice is so far from being mortified by age, that by every days continuance in it we increase the power of it: and so much strength as we add to our disease we certainly take from our selves; And this is a double weakning of us, when we do not only lose our own strength, but the enemy gets it and employs it against us. The deceitfulness of sin appears in nothing more than in keeping men off from this necessary work, and perswading them to hazard all upon the unreasonable hopes of the mercy of God, and the uncertain resolution of a future repentance. I do not think there are any here but do either believe, or at least are vehemently afraid that there is another life after this; and that a wicked life, without repentance must unavoidably make them miserable in another world; and that to cast off all to a death-bed repentance, puts things upon a mighty hazard. And they have a great deal of reason to think so: For alas, how unfit are most men at such a time for so great and serious a work as repentance is, when they are unfit for the smallest matters: And how hard is it for any man then to be assured of the truth and reality of his repentance, when there is no sufficient opportunity to make trial of the sincerity of it. I deny not the possibility of the thing; but it is much to be feared that the repentance of a dying sinner is usually but like the sorrow of a malefactor, when he is ready to be turned off; he is not troubled that he hath offended the Law, but he is troubled that he must dye. For when death is ready to seize upon the sinner, and he feels himself dropping into destruction, no wonder if then the man's stomach come down, and he be contented to be saved; and seeing he must stay no longer in this world, be desirous to go to Heaven rather than Hell; and in order to that, be ready to give some testimonies of his repentance: no wonder if when the rack is before him this extort confession from him, and if in hopes of a pardon he make many large promises of amendment, and freely declare his resolution of a new and better life. But then it is the hardest thing in the world to judge whether any thing of all this that is done under so great a fear and force be real. For a sick man as he hath lost an appetite to the most pleasant meats and drinks, so likewise his sinful pleasures and fleshly lusts are at the same time nauseous to him, and for the very same reason: For Sickness having altered the temper of his body, he hath not at that time any gust or relish for these things. And now he is resolved against sin, just as a man that hath no stomach is resolved again meat. But if the fit were over, and death would but raise his Siege and remove his quarters a little farther from him, it is to be feared that his former appetite would soon return to him, and that he would sin with the same eargerness he did before. Besides, how can we expect that God should accept of his repentance at such a time, when we are conscious to our selves that we did resolve to put off our repentance till we could sin no longer? Can we think it fit for any

man to ſay thus to God in a dying hour; "Lord, now the world leaves "me, I come to thee. I pray thee give me eternal life, who could never "afford to give thee one good day of my life: Grant that I may live with "thee and enjoy thee for ever, who could never endure to think upon "thee. I muſt confeſs that I could never be perſwaded to leave my ſins "out of love to thee, but now I repent of them for fear of thee: I am "conſcious to my ſelf that I would never do any thing for thy ſake, but yet I hope thy goodneſs is ſuch that thou wilt forgive all the ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of my life, and accept of this forced ſubmiſſion "which I now make to thee. I pray thee do not at laſt fruſtrate and diſ-"appoint me in this deſign which I have laid, of ſinning while I live and getting to Heaven when I dye." Surely no man can think it fit to ſay thus to God; and yet I am afraid this is the true interpretation of many a man's repentance who hath deferr'd it till he comes to dye. I do not ſpeak this to diſcourage repentance, even at that time. It is always the beſt thing we can do. But I would by all means diſcourage men from putting off ſo neceſſary a work till then. 'Tis true indeed when 'tis come to this and a ſinner finds himſelf going out of the world, if he have been ſo fooliſh and ſo cruel to himſelf as to put things upon this laſt hazard, repentance is now the only thing that is left for him to do; this is his laſt remedy and the only refuge he has to fly to: And this is that which the Miniſter in this caſe ought by all means to put the man upon, and earneſtly to perſwade him to. But when we ſpeak to men in other circumſtances, that are well and in health, we dare not for all the world encourage them to venture their ſouls upon ſuch an uncertainty. For to ſpeak the beſt of it, it is a very dangerous remedy, eſpecially when men have deſignedly contriv'd to rob God of the ſervice of their beſt days, and to put him off with a few unprofitable ſighs and tears at the hour of death. I deſire to have as large apprehenſions of the mercy of God as any man, but withal, I am very ſure that he is the hardeſt to be impoſed upon of any one in the World. And no man that hath any worthy apprehenſions of the Deity can imagine him to be ſo eaſy, as to forgive men upon the leaſt word and intimation of their minds, and to have ſuch a fondneſs for offenders as would reflect upon the prudence of any Magiſtrate and Governor upon Earth. God grant that I may ſincerely endeavour to live a holy and virtuous like, and may have the comfort of that when I come to dye: And that I may never be ſo un-unwiſe as to venture all my hopes of a bleſſed eternity upon a death-bed repentance.

I will conclude all with thoſe excellent ſayings of the Son of *Syrach* (Ecclus. 5. 6, 7. 16. 11, 12. 18. 21, 22.) *Say not, God's mercy is great, and he will be pacified for the multitude of my ſins. For mercy and wrath is with him; he is mighty to forgive, and to pour out diſpleaſure: And as his mercy is great, ſo are his corrections alſo. Therefore make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day: for ſuddenly ſhall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy ſecurity thou ſhalt be deſtroyed. Humble thy ſelf before thou be ſick, and in the time of ſins ſhew repentance. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vows in due time, and defer not till death to be juſtified.*

SERMON XI.

The Hazard of being Saved in the Church of *Rome*.

1 COR. III. 15.

But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by Fire.

THE Context is thus. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise Master-builder, I have laid the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon: but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

In these words the Apostle speaks of a sort of persons, who held indeed the foundation of *Christianity*, but built upon it such *doctrines* or *practices* as would not bear the *trial*; which he expresses to us by *wood, hay*, and *stubble*, which are not *proof* against the *Fire*. Such a person, the Apostle tells us, hath brought himself into a very dangerous state, though he would not deny the possibility of his salvation; *He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

That by *fire* here is not meant the fire of *Purgatory*, as some pretend (who would be glad of any shadow of a Text of Scripture to countenance their own dreams) I shall neither trouble you nor my self to manifest; since the *Particle* of similitude [ὡς] plainly shews that the Apostle did not intend an escape out of the fire *literally*, but like to that which men make out of a House or Town that is on fire. Especially since very learned persons of the Church of *Rome* do acknowledge that *Purgatory* cannot be concluded from this *Text*, nay all that *Estius* contends for from this *place* is, that it cannot be concluded from hence that there is no *Purgatory*; which we never pretended, but only that this Text doth not prove it.

It is very well known that this is a Proverbial phrase used not only in Scripture, but in prophane Authors to signify *a narrow escape out of a great danger*. He shall be saved, yet so as by fire, διὰ πυρὸς, *out of the fire*. Just as δι' ὕδατος is used 1 *Pet*. 3. 20. where the Apostle speaking of the eight persons of *Noah*'s family who escap'd the flood, διεσώθησαν δι' ὕδατος, they escaped *out of the water*. So here this phrase is to be rendred in the Text, *he himself shall escape, yet so as out of the fire*. The like expression you have, *Amos* 4. 11. *I have pluck'd them as a firebrand out of the fire*. And *Jude* 23. *Others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire*. All which expressions signify the greatness of the danger and the difficulty of escaping it; *as one who when his house at midnight is set on fire, and being suddenly wak'd leaps out of his bed, and runs naked out of the doors, taking nothing that is within along with him,*

but

but employing his whole care to ſave his body from the flames, as S. *Chryſoſtom* upon another occaſion expreſſeth it. And ſo the *Roman* Orator* (who it is likely did not think of *Purgatory*) uſed this phraſe; *Quo ex judicio, velut ex incendio, nudus effugit:* From which Judgment or Sentence he eſcaped naked, as it were out of a burning. And one of the *Greek* Orators † tells us, That *to ſave a man out of the fire, was a common proverbial ſpeech.*

* *Tully.*
† *Ariſtides.*

From the words thus explained, the Obſervation that naturally ariſeth is this, *That men may hold all the Fundamentals of Chriſtian Religion, and yet may ſuperadd other things whereby they may greatly endanger their ſalvation.* What thoſe things were which ſome among the *Corinthians* built upon the foundation of Chriſtianity, whereby they endanger'd their Salvation, we may probably conjecture by what the Apoſtle reproves in this Epiſtle, as the tolerating of *inceſtuous marriages*, communicating in *Idol Feaſts*, &c. And eſpecially by the doctrine of the falſe Apoſtles, who at that time did ſo much diſturb the peace of moſt Chriſtian Churches, and who are ſo often and ſo ſeverely reflected upon in this Epiſtle. And what their *Doctrine* was, we have an account, *Acts* 15. *viz.* that they impoſed upon the *Gentile* Chriſtians *Circumciſion, and the obſervation of the Jewiſh Law*, teaching that *unleſs they were circumciſed, and kept the Law of Moſes, they could not be ſaved.* So that they did not only build theſe doctrines upon *Chriſtianity*, but they made them equal with the *Foundation*, ſaying, that *unleſs men believed and practiſed ſuch things they could not be ſaved.*

In ſpeaking to this *Obſervation*, I ſhall reduce my diſcourſe to theſe two Heads.

1. I ſhall preſent to you ſome *Doctrines* and *Practices* which have been built upon the *Foundation of Chriſtianity*, to the great hazard and danger of mens *ſalvation.* And to be plain, I mean particularly the Church of *Rome.*

2. I ſhall enquire, whether our granting a *poſſibility* of ſalvation (tho with great hazard) to thoſe in the communion of the *Roman* Church, and their denying it to us, be a reaſonable argument and encouragement to any man to betake himſelf to that Church.

And there is the more reaſon to conſider theſe things, when ſo many *ſeducing Spirits* are ſo active and buſy to pervert men from the *truth*; and when we ſee every day ſo many men and their *Religion* ſo eaſily parted. For this reaſon theſe two Conſiderations ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

I. *Firſt*, We will conſider ſome *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* hath built upon the *foundation* of *Chriſtianity*, to the great hazard and danger of mens *ſalvation.* It is not denied by the moſt judicious *Proteſtants*, but that the Church of *Rome* do hold all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith which are neceſſary to ſalvation. But that which we charge upon them, as a juſt ground of our ſeparation from them, is *the impoſing of new Doctrines and practices upon Chriſtians as neceſſary to ſalvation*, which were never taught by our Saviour, or his Apoſtles; and which are either directly contrary to the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, or too apparently deſtructive of a good life. And I begin,

1. With their *Doctrines.* And becauſe I have no mind to aggravate leſſer matters, I will ſingle out four or five points of Doctrine, which they have added to the Chriſtian Religion, and which were neither taught by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, nor own'd in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. And the

Firſt which I ſhall mention, and which being once admitted makes way for as many errors as they pleaſe to bring in, is *their Doctrine of Infallibility.*

And

And this they are very ſtiff and peremptory in, tho they are not agreed among themſelves where this *Infallibility* is ſeated; whether in the *Pope alone*, or a *Council alone*, or in *both together*, or in the *diffuſive body of Chriſtians*. But they are ſure they have it, though they know not where it is.

And is this no prejudice againſt it? Can any man think that this *priviledge* was at firſt conferred upon the Church of *Rome*, and that Chriſtians in all Ages did believe it, and had conſtant recourſe to it for determining their differences, and yet that that very Church which hath enjoyed and uſed it ſo long ſhould now be at a loſs where to find it? Nothing could have fallen out more unluckily, than that there ſhould be ſuch differences among them about that which they pretend to be the only means of ending all differences.

There is not the leaſt intimation in Scripture of this *Priviledge* conferr'd upon the *Roman* Church, nor do the Apoſtles, in all their Epiſtles, ever ſo much as give the leaſt direction to Chriſtians to appeal to the Biſhop of *Rome* for a determination of the many differences which even in thoſe times happen'd among them. And it is ſtrange they ſhould be ſo ſilent in this matter, when there were ſo many *occaſions* to ſpeak of it, if our Saviour had plainly appointed ſuch an *Infallible Judge* of controverſies for this very end to decide the differences that ſhould happen among Chriſtians. It is ſtrange that the *Ancient Fathers* in their diſputes with Hereticks ſhould never appeal to this *Judge*; nay, it is ſtrange they ſhould not conſtantly do it in all caſes, it being ſo ſhort and expedite a way for the ending of controverſies. And this very conſideration to a wiſe man is inſtead of a thouſand arguments to ſatisfy him that in thoſe times no ſuch thing was believed in the world.

Now this *Doctrine of Infallibility*, if it be not true, is of ſo much the more pernicious conſequence to Chriſtianity, becauſe the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it, in all their other errors; and gives them a pretence of aſſuming an authority to themſelves to impoſe their own fancies and miſtakes upon the whole Chriſtian world.

2. Their *Doctrine* about *Repentance*, which conſiſts in confeſſing their ſins to the Prieſt; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of *contrition*, does upon *abſolution* received from the Prieſt put them into a ſtate of *ſalvation*, tho they have lived the moſt lewd and debauch'd lives that can be imagin'd; than which nothing can be more plainly deſtructive of a good life. For if this be true, all the hazard that the moſt wicked man runs of his ſalvation is only the danger of ſo *ſudden a death* as gives him no ſpace for confeſſion and abſolution. A caſe that happens ſo rarely, that any man that is ſtrongly addicted to his luſts will be content to venture his ſalvation upon this hazard; and all the arguments to a good life will be very inſignificant to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when remiſſion of ſins may be had upon ſuch cheap terms.

3. *The Doctrine of Purgatory*; By which they mean an eſtate of temporary puniſhments after this life, from which men may be releaſed and tranſlated into Heaven by the prayers of the living, and the Sacrifice of the *Maſs*. That this Doctrine was not known in the Primitive Church, nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as learned and eminent men as any of that Church; which is to acknowledge that it is a ſuperſtructure upon the Chriſtian Religion. And tho in one ſenſe it be indeed a building of *gold* and *ſilver* upon the foundation of Chriſtianity, conſidering the vaſt revenues which this Doctrine (and that of *Indulgences*, which depends upon it) brings into that Church; yet I doubt not, but in the Apoſtles ſenſe, it will be found to be *hay* and *ſtubble*. But how groundleſs ſoever it be, it is too gainful a Doctrine to be eaſily parted withal.

4. *The Doctrine of Transubstantiation.* A hard *word*, but I would to God that were the worst of it; the *thing* is much more difficult. I have taken some pains to consider other Religions that have been in the world, and I must freely declare, that I never yet in any of them met with any Article or Proposition, imposed upon the belief of men, half so unreasonable and hard to be believed as this is: And yet this in the *Romish* Church is esteemed one of the most principal Articles of the Christian Faith; tho there is no more certain foundation for it in Scripture, than for our Saviour's being substantially changed into all those things which are said of him, as that he is a *rock*, a *vine*, a *door*, and a hundred other things.

But this is not all. This Doctrine hath not only *no certain Foundation* in Scripture, but I have a far heavier charge against it, namely, that it undermines the very foundation of Christianity it self. And surely nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the *Christian Doctrine* which destroys the reason of our belief of the whole. And that this Doctrine does so, will appear evidently, if we consider what was the main argument which the Apostles used to convince the world of the *truth of Christianity*; and that was this, *That our blessed Saviour, the Author of this Doctrine, wrought such and such miracles, and particularly that he rose again from the dead.* And this they proved because they were eye-witnesses of his miracles, and had seen him and conversed with him after he was risen from the dead. But what if their senses did deceive them in this matter? then it cannot be denied but that the main proof of Christianity falls to the ground.

Well! We will now suppose (as the Church of *Rome* does) *Transubstantiation* to have been one principal part of the Christian Doctrine which the Apostles preached. But if this Doctrine be true, then all mens senses are deceived in a plain sensible matter, wherein 'tis as hard for them to be deceived as in any thing in the world: For two things can hardly be imagin'd more different, than a *little bit* of wafer and the *whole body* of a man.

So that the Apostles persuading men to belive this Doctrine persuaded them not to trust their senses, and yet the argument which they used to persuade them to this was built upon the direct contrary principle, that *mens senses are to be trusted.* For if they be not, then notwithstanding all the evidence the Apostles offer'd for the resurrection of our Saviour, he might not be risen, and so the faith of Christians was vain. So that they represent the Apostles as absurd as is possible, *viz.* going about to persuade men out of their senses by virtue of an argument, the whole strength whereof depends upon the certainty of sense.

And now the matter is brought to a fair issue; If the testimony of *sense* be to be relied upon, then *Transubstantiation* is false; If it be not, then no man is sure that Christianity is true. For the utmost assurance that the Apostles had of the truth of Christianity was the testimony of their own senses concerning our Saviour's Miracles, and this testimony every man hath against *Transubstantiation.* From whence it plainly follows, that no man (no not the Apostles themselve) had more reason to believe *Christianity* to be true, than every man hath to believe *Transubstantiation* to be false. And we who did not see our Saviour's Miracles (as the Apostles did) and have only a credible relation of them, but do see the *Sacrament*, have less evidence of the *truth of Christianity* than of the *falshood* of *Transubstantiation.*

But cannot God impose upon the senses of men, and represent things to them otherwise than they are? Yes, undoubtedly. And if he hath revealed that he doth this, are we not to believe him? Most certainly. But then we ought to be assured that he hath made such a Revelation; which *Assurance* no man can have, the certainty of sense being taken away. I shall

. I shall press the business a little farther. Supposing the *Scripture* to be a *Divine Revelation*, and that these words (*This is my Body*) if they be in Scripture, must necessarily be taken in the strict and literal sense; I ask now, what greater evidence any man has that these words (*This is my Body*) are in the Bible, than every man has that the Bread is not chang'd in the Sacrament? Nay no man has so much; for we have only the evidence of *one* sense that these words are in the Bible, but that the Bread is not chang'd we have the concurring testimony of *several* of our senses. In a word, if this be once admitted that the *Senses* of all men are deceiv'd in one of the most plain sensible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or prove a *Divine Revelation* to men; nor is there any way to confute the grossest impostures in the world: For if the clear evidence of all mens senses be not sufficient for this purpose, let any man, if he can, find a better and more convincing argument.

5. I will instance but in one *Doctrine* more; And that shall be, their *Doctrine* of *deposing Kings* in case of Heresy, and absolving their Subjects from their Allegiance to them. And this is not a mere *speculative doctrine*, but hath been put in practice many a time by the Bishops of *Rome*, as every one knows that is vers'd in History. For the troubles and confusions which were occasion'd by this very thing make up a good part of the History of several Ages.

I hope no body expects that I should take the pains to shew that this was not the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, nor of the Primitive Christians. The *Papists* are many of them so far from pretending this, that in some times and places, when it is not seasonable and for their purpose, we have much a-do to persuade them that ever it was their Doctrine. But if *Transubstantiation* be their Doctrine, *this* is; for they came both out of the same Forge, I mean the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the Third. And if (as they tell us) *Transubstantiation* was then establish'd so was *this*. And indeed one would think they were Twins and brought forth at the same time, they are so like one another, both of them so monstrously unreasonable.

II. I come now in the *second* place to consider some *Practices* of the Church of *Rome*, which I am afraid will prove as bad as her *Doctrines*. I shall instance in these five.

1. Their celebrating of their Divine service *in an unknown tongue*. And that not only contrary to the practice of the Primitive Church, and to the great end and design of Religious Worship, which is the edification of those who are concerned in it, (and it is hard to imagine how men can be edified by what they do not understand) but likewise in direct contradiction to St. *Paul*, who hath no less than a whole Chapter wherein he confutes this practice as fully, and condemns it as plainly as any thing is condemned in the whole Bible. And they that can have the face to maintain that this practice was not condemned by St. *Paul*, or that it was allowed and used in the first Ages of Christianity, need not be ashamed to set up for the defence of any Paradox in the World.

2. The *Communion in one kind*. And that notwithstanding that even by their own acknowledgment our Saviour instituted it in both kinds, and the Primitive Church administred it in both kinds. This I must acknowledge is *no addition* to Christianity but *a sacrilegious taking away* of an essential part of the Sacrament. For the *Cup* is as essential a part of the institution as the *Bread*; and they might as well, and by the same authority, take away the one as the other, and both as well as either.

3. Their worſhipping of *Images.* Which practice (notwithſtanding all their diſtinctions about it, which are no other but what the *Heathens* uſed in the ſame caſe) is as point-blank againſt the *ſecond commandment*, as a *deliberate* and *malicious killing* of a man is againſt the *ſixth*. But if the caſe be ſo plain, a man would think that at leaſt the Teachers and Guides of that Church ſhould be ſenſible of it. Why, they are ſo, and afraid the people ſhould be ſo too, and therefore in their ordinary *Catechiſms* and *Manuals* of Devotion they leave out the *ſecond Commandment*, and divide the *tenth* into two to make up the number; leſt if the common people ſhould know it their Conſciences ſhould ſtart at the doing of a thing ſo directly contrary to the plain command of God.

4. The worſhipping of the *Bread* and *Wine* in the Euchariſt, out of a falſe and groundleſs perſuaſion, *that they are ſubſtantially changed into the body and blood of Chriſt.* Which if it be not true (and it hath good fortune if it be, for certainly it is one of the moſt incredible things in the whole World) then by the confeſſion of ſeveral of their own learned Writers, they are guilty of *groſs Idolatry.*

5. The worſhip and invocation of *Saints* and *Angels*; and particularly of the Virgin *Mary*, which hath now for ſome Ages been a principal part of their Religion. Now a man may juſtly wonder that ſo conſiderable a part of Religion as they make this to be ſhould have no manner of foundation in the Scripture. Does our Saviour any where ſpeak one word concerning the worſhipping of Her? Nay, does he not take all occaſions to reſtrain all extravagant apprehenſions and imaginations concerning honour due to Her, as foreſeeing the degeneracy of the Church in this thing? When he was told that his Mother and Brethren were without; *Who* (ſays he) *are my mother and my brethren? He that doth the will of my Father, the ſame is my mother, and ſiſter, and brother.* And when the Woman brake forth into that rapture concerning the bleſſed Mother of our Lord, *Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee ſuck!* Our Saviour diverts to another thing, *Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* Does either our Saviour or his Apoſtles in all their particular Precepts and Directions concerning Prayer, and the manner of it, and by whom we are to addreſs our ſelves to God, give the leaſt intimation of praying to the Virgin *Mary*, or making uſe of her Mediation? And can any man believe, that if this had been the practice of the Church from the beginning, our *Saviour* and his Apoſtles would have been ſo ſilent about ſo conſiderable a part of Religion; inſomuch that in all the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles I do not remember that her Name is ſo much as once mentioned? And yet the worſhip of her is at this day in the Church of *Rome*, and hath been ſo for ſeveral Ages, a main part of their publick worſhip, yea and of their private devotions too; in which it is uſual with them to ſay *ten Ave Maries* for *one Pater Noſter*; that is, for one Prayer they make to Almighty God, they make ten addreſſes to the bleſſed Virgin; for that is the proportion obſerved in their *Roſaries.* He that conſiders *this*, and had never ſeen the *Bible*, would have been apt to think that there had been more ſaid concerning *Her* in Scripture, than either concerning *God*, or our bleſſed *Saviour*; and that the New Teſtament were full from one end to the other of precepts and exhortations to the worſhipping of Her; and yet when all is done, I challenge any man to ſhew me ſo much as one Sentence in the whole Bible that ſounds that way. And there is as little in the Chriſtian Writers of the firſt three hundred years. The truth is, *this practice* began to creep in among ſome ſuperſtitious people about the middle of the *fourth Century*: And I remember particularly, that

that *Epiphanius* who lived about that time calls it the *Heresy of the Women.*

And thus I have given you some Instances of several *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* hath built upon the Foundation of *Christianity.* Much more might have been said of them, but from what hath been said any man may easily discern how dangerous they are to the salvation of men.

I proceed now in the Second place,

II. To consider, Whether our granting a *possibility of salvation*, though with great hazard, to those in the Communion of the *Roman* Church, and their denying it to us, be a sufficient argument and encouragement to any man to quit our Church and go to theirs. And there is the more need to consider this, because this is the great *popular argument* wherewith the *emissaries* and *agents* of that Church are wont to assault our people. *Your Church* (say they) *grants that a Papist may be saved; Ours denies that a Protestant can be saved; therefore it is safest to be of our Church, in which salvation by the acknowledgment of both sides is possible.*

For answer to this I shall endeavour to shew, that this is so far from being a *good argument* that it is so intolerably *weak* and *sophistical* that any considerate man ought to be asham'd to be catch'd by it. For either it is good of it self and sufficient to persuade a man to relinquish our Church, and to pass over to theirs, without entring into the merits of the cause on either side, and without comparing the Doctrines and Practices of both the Churches together, or it is not. If it be not sufficient *of it self* to persuade a man to leave our Church, without comparing the Doctrines on both sides, then it is to no purpose, and there is nothing got by it. For if upon examination and comparing of Doctrines the one appear to be *true* and the other *false*, this alone is a sufficient inducement to any man to cleave to that Church where the true Doctrine is found; and then there is no need of this argument.

If it be said that this argument is good in it self without the examination of the Doctrines of both Churches; this seems a very strange thing for any man to affirm, *That it is reason enough to a man to be of any Church, whatever her Doctrines and Practices be, if she do but damn those that differ from her, and if the Church that differs from her do but allow a possibility of salvation in her Communion.*

But they who use this *argument*, pretend that it is sufficient of it self; and therefore I shall apply my self to shew, as briefly and plainly as I can, the miserable *weakness* and *insufficiency* of it to satisfy any man's conscience or prudence to change his Religion. And to this end I shall,

1. Shew the weakness of the *principle* upon which this *argument* relies.

2. Give some *parallel instances* by which it will clearly appear that it concludes false.

3. I shall take notice of some *gross absurdities* that follow from it.

4. Shew how unfit it is to work upon those to whom it is propounded. And

5. How improper it is to be urged by those that make use of it.

I. I shall shew the weakness of the *principle* upon which this *argument* relies; And that is this, *That whatever different parties in Religion agree in, is safest to be chosen.* The true consequence of which *principle* if it be driven to the head, is to persuade men to forsake Christianity, and to make them take up in the principles of *natural Religion*, for in these all Religions do agree. For if this *principle* be true, and signify any thing, it is dangerous to embrace any thing wherein the several parties in Religion differ; because that only is safe and prudent to be chosen wherein all agree. So that this *ar-*

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gument, if the foundation of it be good, will perswade farther than those who make use of it desire it should do; for it will not only make men forsake the *Protestant Religion*, but *Popery* too; and which is much more considerable, *Christianity* it self.

II. I will give some *parallel instances* by which it will clearly be seen that this *argument* concludes false. The *Donatists* denied the Baptism of the *Catholicks* to be good, but the *Catholicks* acknowledged the Baptism of the *Donatists* to be valid. So that both sides were agreed that the Baptism of the *Donatists* was good, therefore the safest way for St. *Austin* and other *Catholicks* (according to this *argument*) was to be baptized again by the *Donatists*, because by the acknowledgment of both sides Baptism among them was valid.

But to come nearer to the Church of *Rome.* Several in that Church hold *the personal Infallibility of the Pope, and the lawfulness of deposing and killing Kings for Heresy* to be *de fide*, that is, necessary Articles of Faith, and consequently, that whoever does not believe them cannot be saved. But a great many *Papists* though they believe these things to be no matters of Faith, yet they think those that hold them may be saved, and they are generally very favourable towards them. But now, according to this *argument*, they ought all to be of their opinion in these points because both sides are agreed that *they that hold them may be saved*; but one side positively says that *men cannot be saved if they do not hold them.*

But my Text furnishes me with as good an instance to this purpose as can be desired. St. *Paul* here in the Text acknowledgeth the *possibility* of the *salvation* of those *who built hay and stubble upon the foundation of Christianity*; *that they might be saved*, tho with great difficulty, and as it were *out of the fire.* But now among those builders with hay and stubble there were those who denied the possibility of St. *Paul*'s salvation and of those who were of his mind. We are told of some who built the *Jewish* Ceremonies and observances upon the foundation of Christianity, and said that unless men were Circumcised and kept the Law of *Moses* they could not be saved. So that by this argument St. *Paul* and his followers ought to have gone over to those *Judaizing Christians*, because it was acknowledged on both sides that they might be saved. But these *Judaizing Christians* were as uncharitable to St. *Paul* and other Christians, as the Church of *Rome* is now to us, for they said positively *that they could not be saved.* But can any man think that St. *Paul* would have been moved by this argument, to leave a safe and certain way of salvation for that which was only possible, and that with great difficulty and hazard? The argument you see is the very same, and yet it concludes the wrong way; which plainly shews that it is a *contingent argument*, and concludes uncertainly and by chance, and therefore no man ought to be moved by it.

III. I shall take notice of some *gross absurdities* that follow from it. I shall mention but these two.

1. According to this *principle* it is always safest to be on the *uncharitable side.* And yet uncharitableness is as bad an evidence, either of a true Christian, or a true Church, as a man would wish. *Charity* is one of the most essential marks of Christianity, and what the Apostle saith of particular Christians is as true of whole Churches, *that though they have all Faith, yet if they have not Charity they are nothing.*

I grant that no Charity teacheth men to see others damned and not to tell them the danger of their condition. But it is to be consider'd that the damn-

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ing of men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it the caſe muſt be wonderfully plain. And is it ſo in this matter? They of the Church of *Rome* cannot deny but that we embrace all the Doctrines of our Saviour contain'd in the Apoſtles Creed, and determined by the Four firſt General Councils: and yet they will not allow this and a good life to put us within a poſſibility of Salvation, becauſe we will not ſubmit to all the innovations they would impoſe upon us. And yet I think there is ſcarce any *Doctrine* or *Practice* in difference between them and us, which ſome or other of their moſt learned Writers have not acknowledg'd either not to be ſufficiently contained in Scripture, or not to have been held and practiſed by the primitive Church; ſo that nothing can excuſe their uncharitableneſs towards us. And they pay dear for the little advantage they get by this *argument*, for they do what in them lies to make themſelves no Chriſtians that they may prove themſelves the truer and more Chriſtian Church. A *medium* which we do not deſire to make uſe of.

2. If this *argument* were good, then by this trick a man may bring over all the world to agree with him in an error which another does not account damnable, whatever it be, provided he do but damn all thoſe that do not hold it; and there wants nothing but *confidence* and *uncharitableneſs* to do this. But is there any ſenſe, that another mans boldneſs and want of charity ſhould be an argument to move me to be of his opinion? I cannot illuſtrate this better, than by the difference between a skilful Phyſician and a Mountebank. A *learned* and a *skilful Phyſician* is modeſt, and ſpeaks *juſtly* of things: he ſays, that ſuch a method of cure which he hath directed is ſafe; and withal, that that which the *Mountebank* preſcribes may poſſibly do the work, but there is great hazard and danger in it; But the *Mountebank*, who never talks of any thing leſs than *Infallible cures*, (and always the more *Mountebank* the ſtronger pretence to *Infallibity*) he is poſitive that that method which the *Phyſician* preſcribes will deſtroy the Patient, but his receipt is infallible and never fails. Is there any reaſon in this caſe, that this man ſhall carry it merely by his *confidence?* And yet if this *argument* be good, the ſafeſt way is to reject the *Phyſician*'s advice and to ſtick to the *Mountebank*'s. For both ſides are agreed, that there is a poſſibility of cure in the *Mountebank*'s method, but not in the *Phyſician*'s; and ſo the whole force of the argument lies in the *confidence* of an *ignorant man.*

IV. This *argument* is very unfit to work upon *thoſe* to whom it is propounded: For either they believe we ſay true in this, or not. If they think we do not, they have no reaſon to be moved by what we ſay. If they think we do, why do they not take in all that we ſay in this matter? Namely, that though it be poſſible for ſome in the Communion of the *Roman* Church to be ſaved, yet it is very hazardous; and that they are in a ſafe condition already in our Church. And why then ſhould a *bare poſſibility*, accompanied with infinite and apparent hazard, be an argument to any man to run into that danger?

Laſtly, This *argument* is very improper to be urged by thoſe who make uſe of it. Half of the ſtrength of it lies in this, that we *Proteſtants* acknowledge that *it is poſſible a Papiſt may be ſaved.* But why ſhould they lay any ſtreſs upon this? What matter is it what we Hereticks ſay, who are ſo damnably miſtaken in all other things? Methinks if there were no other reaſon, yet becauſe we ſay it, it ſhould ſeem to them to be unlikely to be true. But I perceive when it ſerves for their purpoſe we have ſome little credit and authority among them.

By this time I hope every one is in ſome meaſure ſatisfied of the *weakneſs*

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of this argument, which is ſo tranſparent that no wiſe man can honeſtly uſe it, and he muſt have a very odd underſtanding that can be cheated by it. The truth is, it is a *caſual and contingent argument*, and ſometimes it concludes right, and oftner wrong; and therefore no prudent man can be moved by it, except only in one caſe, when all things are ſo equal on both ſides that there is nothing elſe in the whole world to determine him; which ſurely can never happen in matters of Religion, neceſſary to be believed. No man is ſo weak, as not to conſider in the change of his Religion the *merits* of the *cauſe it ſelf*; as not to examine the *Doctrines* and *Practices* of the Churches on both ſides; as not to take notice of the *confidence* and *Charity* of both Parties, together with all other things which ought to move a conſcientious and a prudent man: And if upon enquiry there appear to be a clear advantage on either ſide, then this *argument* is needleſs and comes too late, becauſe the work is already done without it.

Beſides, that the great hazard of ſalvation in the *Roman* Church (which we declare upon account of the *Doctrines* and *Practices* which I have mentioned) ought to deter any man much more from that Religion, than the acknowledged poſſibilty of ſalvation in it ought to encourage any man to the embracing of it; Never did any Chriſtian Church build ſo much *hay* and *ſtubble* upon the *foundation* of Chriſtianity, and therefore *thoſe that are ſaved in it muſt be ſaved*, as it were, *out of the fire*. And tho *Purgatory* be not meant in the Text, yet it is a Doctrine very well ſuited to their manner of building; for there is need of an *ignis purgatorius*, of a *fire* to try their work what it is, and to *burn* up their *hay* and *ſtubble*. And I have ſo much Charity (and I deſire always to have it) as to hope, that a great many among them who lived piouſly, and have been almoſt inevitably detain'd in that Church by the prejudice of education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a *general Repentance* find mercy with God; and *tho their works ſuffer loſs, and be burnt*, yet *they themſelves may eſcape, as out of the fire*. But as for thoſe who had the opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the truth, if they continue in the errors of that Church, or apoſtatize from the truth, I think their condition ſo far from being ſafe that there muſt be extraordinary favourable circumſtances in their caſe to give a man hopes of their ſalvation.

I have now done with the *two* things I propounded to ſpeak to. And I am ſorry that the *neceſſary defence* of our Religion, againſt the *reſtleſs importunities* and *attempts* of our adverſaries upon all ſorts of perſons, hath engaged me to ſpend ſo much time in matters of diſpute, which I had much rather have employed in another way. Many of you can be my witneſſes that I have conſtantly made it my buſineſs, in this great Preſence and Aſſembly to plead againſt the *impieties* and *wickedneſs* of men, and have endeavoured by the beſt arguments I could think of to gain men over to a *firm belief* and ſerious *practice* of the main things of Religion. And I do aſſure you, I had much rather perſuade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or denomination of Chriſtians whatſoever. For I doubt not but *the belief of the ancient Creed*, provided we entertain nothing that is deſtructive of it, *together with a good life, will certainly ſave a man*; and without this no man can have reaſonable hopes of ſalvation, no not in an infallible Church, if there were any ſuch to be found in the world.

I have been, according to my opportunities, not a negligent obſerver of the *genius* and humour of the ſeveral Sects and Profeſſions in Religion; and upon the whole matter, I do in my conſcience believe the Church of *England* to be the beſt conſtituted Church this day in the world; and that

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as to the main, the *Doctrine*, and *Government*, and *Worship* of it, are excellently framed to make men *soberly Religious:* Securing men on the one hand, from the wild freaks of *Enthusiasm*; and on the other, from the gross follies of *Superstition*. And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above several Professions that we know in the world, that it acknowledgeth a due and just subordination to the *civil Authority*, and hath always been untainted in its *Loyalty*.

And now shall every trifling consideration be sufficient to move a man to relinquish such a Church? There is no greater disparagement to a man's understanding, no greater argument of a light and ungenerous mind, than rashly to change one's Religion. *Religion* is our greatest concernment of all other, and it is not every *little argument*, no nor a great noise about *infallibility*, nothing but very *plain* and *convincing evidence*, that should sway a man in this case. But they are utterly inexcusable who mak a change of such concernment upon the insinuations of one side only, without ever hearing what can be said for the Church they were baptized and brought up in before they leave it. They that can yield thus easily to the impressions of every one that hath a design and interest to make *Proselytes*, may at this rate of discretion change their *Religion* twice a day, and instead of *morning* and *evening Prayer*, they may have a *morning* and *evening Religion*.

Therefore for God's sake, and for our own Souls sake, and for the sake of our Reputation let us consider and *shew our selves men*; Let us not suffer our selves to be shaken and carried away with every wind. Let us not run our selves into danger when we may be safe. Let us stick to the *foundation of Religion*, the *Articles* of our *common belief*, and build upon them gold, and silver, and precious stones, I mean, the *virtues and actions of a good life*; and if we would do this, we should not be apt to set such a value upon *hay* and *stubble*. If we would sincerely endeavour to live *holy* and *virtuous lives*, we should not need to cast about for a *Religion* which may furnish us with easy and indirect ways to get to Heaven.

I will conclude all with the Apostle's Exhortation, *Wherefore my beloved Brethren be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the works of the Lord.*

Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XII.

Of the Inward Peace and Pleaſure which attends Religion.

PSAL. CXIX. 165.

Great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them.

IN theſe words there are two things contained, the Deſcription of a good man, and the Reward of his goodneſs.

1. The Deſcription of a good man: he is ſaid to be one that *loves the Law* of God, that is, that loves to mediate upon it, and to practiſe it.

2. The Reward of his goodneſs; *Great peace have they that love thy Law.* The word *Peace* is many times uſed in Scripture in a very large ſenſe, ſo as to comprehend all kind of happineſs: ſometimes it ſignifies outward peace and quiet, in oppoſition to war and contention; and ſometimes inward peace and contentment in oppoſition to inward trouble and anguiſh. I underſtand the *Text* chiefly in this laſt ſenſe, not wholly excluding either of the other.

My deſign at preſent from theſe words is, to recommend Religion to men from the conſideration of that inward peace and pleaſure which attends it. And ſurely nothing can be ſaid more to the advantage of Religion in the opinion of conſiderate men than this. For the aim of all Philoſophy, and the great ſearch of wiſe men, hath been how to attain peace and tranquility of mind. And if Religion be able to give this, a greater commendation need not be given to Religion.

But before I enter upon this argument, I ſhall premiſe *two* things by way of Caution:

Firſt, That theſe kind of Obſervations are not to be taken too ſtrictly and rigorouſly, as if they never failed in any one inſtance. *Ariſtotle* obſerved long ſince, that moral and proverbial ſayings are underſtood to be true generally and for the moſt part; and that is all the truth that is to be expected in them; As, when *Solomon* ſays, *Train up a child in the way wherein he ſhall go, and when he is old he will not depart from it:* This is not to be ſo taken as if no child that is piouſly educated did ever miſcarry afterwards, but that the good education of children is the beſt way to make good men, and commonly approved to be ſo by experience. So here, when it is ſaid that *great peace have they that love God's Law*; the meaning is that Religion hath generally this effect, though in ſome caſes, and as to ſome perſons, it may be accidentally hindred.

Secondly, When I ſay that Religion gives peace and tranquility to our minds, this is chiefly to be underſtood of a Religious ſtate in which a man is well ſettled and confirmed, and not of our firſt entrance into it, for that

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is more or leſs troubleſome according as we make it. If we begin a religious courſe betimes, before we have contracted any great guilt, and before the habits of ſin be grown ſtrong in us, the work goes on eaſily without any great conflict or reſiſtance. But the caſe is otherwiſe when a man breaks off from a wicked life, and becomes religious from the direct contrary courſe in which he hath been long and deeply engaged. In this caſe no man is ſo unreaſonable as to deny, that there is a great deal of ſenſible trouble and difficulty in the making of this change; but when it is once made, peace and comfort will ſpring up by degrees, and daily increaſe as we grow more confirmed and eſtabliſhed in a good courſe.

Theſe *two* things being premiſed, I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew that Religion gives a man the greateſt pleaſure and ſatisfaction of mind, and that there is no true peace, nor any comparable pleaſure to be had in a contrary courſe. And that from theſe two heads. From *Teſtimony of Scripture*; and from the *Nature of Religion* which is apt to produce peace and tranquility of mind.

I. *Firſt*, From *Teſtimony of Scripture.* I ſhall ſelect ſome of thoſe *Texts* which are more full and expreſs to this purpoſe, *Job* 22. 21. ſpeaking of God, *Acquaint thy ſelf now with him and be at peace. To acquaint our ſelves with God* is a phraſe of the ſame importance with *coming to God*, and *ſeeking of him*, and many other like expreſſions in Scripture which ſignify nothing elſe but to become religious, *Pſal.* 37. 38. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace:* Or, as theſe words are rendred according to the LXX. in our old Tranſlation, *Keep innocency, take heed to the thing that is right, for that ſhall bring thee peace at the laſt.* Prov. 3. 17. Where *Solomon* ſpeaking of *Wiſdom*, which with him is but another name for *Religion*, ſays, *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.* Iſ. 32. 17. *The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.* Matth. 11. 28, 29. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you reſt.* Now *to come to Chriſt* is to become his Diſciples, to believe and practiſe his Doctrine; for ſo our *Saviour* explains himſelf in the next words, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye ſhall find reſt for your Souls.* Rom. 2. 10. *Glory, and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good.*

And on the contrary the *Scripture* repreſents the condition of a ſinner to be full of trouble and diſquiet. *David* tho he was a very good man yet when he had grievouſly offended God the anguiſh of his mind was ſuch, as even to diſorder and diſtemper his body, *Pſal.* 38. 2, 3, 4. *Thine arrows ſtick faſt in me, and thy hand preſſeth me ſore; there is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh becauſe of thine anger, neither is there any reſt in my bones becauſe of my ſin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head, and as an heavy burthen they are too heavy for me.* Iſa. 57. 20, 21. *The wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt; there is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.* And *Iſa.* 59. 7, 8. *Miſery and deſtruction are in their paths, and the way of peace they know not; they have made themſelves crooked paths, whoſoever goeth therein ſhall not know peace.* Rom. 2. 9. *Tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil.*

You ſee how full and expreſs the *Scripture* is in this matter. I come now in the

II. *Second* place, To give you a more particular account of this from the *Nature of Religion*, which is apt to produce peace and tranquility of mind. And that I ſhall do in theſe three particulars.

1. Religion is apt to remove the chief cauſes of inward trouble and diſquiet.

2. It furnishes us with all the true causes of peace and tranquility of mind.

3. The reflection upon a religious course of life and all the actions of it, doth afterwards yield great pleasure and satisfaction.

First, Religion is apt to remove the chief causes of inward trouble and disquiet. The chief causes of inward trouble and discontent are these *two*, *Doubting* and anxiety of mind, and *Guilt* of Conscience. Now Religion is apt to free us from both these.

1. From *Doubting* and anxiety of mind. Irreligion and Atheism makes a man full of doubts and jealousies whether he be in the right, and whether at last things will not prove quite otherwise than he hath rashly determined. For tho a man endeavour never so much to settle himself in the principles of Infidelity, and to persuade his mind that there is no God, and consequently that there are no rewards to be hoped for, nor punishments to be feared in another life; yet he can never attain to a steddy and unshaken persuasion of these things: and however he may please himself with witty reasons against the common belief of mankind, and smart repartees to their arguments, and bold and pleasant railery about these matters; yet I dare say, no man ever sate down in a clear and full satisfaction concerning them. For when he hath done all that he can to reason himself out of Religion, his conscience ever and anon recoils upon him, and his natural thoughts and apprehensions rise up against his reasonings, and all his wit and subtilty is confuted and born down by a secret and strong suspicion, which he can by no means get out of his mind, that things may be otherwise.

And the reason hereof is plain, because all this is an endeavour against nature and those vigorous instincts which God hath planted in the minds of men to the contrary. For whenever our minds are free and not violently hurried away by passion, nor blinded by prejudice, they do of themselves return to their first and most natural apprehension of things. And this is the reason why when the Atheist falls into any great calamity, and is awakened to an impartial consideration of things by the apprehension of Death and Judgment, and despairs of enjoying any longer those pleasures for the sake of which he hath all this while rebelled against Religion, his courage presently sinks, and all his arguments fail him, and his case is now too serious to admit of jesting, and at the bottom of his soul he doubts of all that which he asserted with so much confidence and set so good a face upon before, and can find no ease to his mind but in retreating from his former principles, nor no hopes of consolation for himself but in acknowledging that God whom he hath denied, and imploring his mercy whom he hath affronted.

This is always the case of these persons when they come to extremity, not to mention the infinite checks and rebukes which their own minds give them upon other occasions; so that 'tis very seldom that these men have any tolerable enjoyment of themselves, but are forc'd to run away from themselves into company, and to stupify themselves by intemperance, that they may not feel the fearful twitches and gripings of their own minds.

Whereas he who entertains the principles of Religion, and therein follows his own natural apprehensions and the general voice of mankind, and is not conscious to himself that he knowingly and wilfully lives contrary to these principles, hath no anxiety in his mind about these things; being verily persuaded they are true, and that he hath all the reason in the world to think so; and if they should prove otherwise (which he hath no other cause to suspect) yet he hath this satisfaction, that he hath taken the wisest course and hath consulted his own present peace and future security infinitely better than

than the Atheist hath done, in case he should prove to be mistaken. For it is a fatal mistake to think there is no God, if there be one; but a mistake on the other hand hath no future bad consequences depending upon it, nor indeed any great present inconvenience, Religion only restraining a man from doing some things, from most of which it is good he should be restrained however; so that at the worst the religious man is only mistaken, but the Atheist is miserable if he be mistaken; *miserable* beyond all imagination, and past all remedy.

2. Another, and indeed a principal cause of trouble and discontent to the minds of men is *Guilt*. Now Guilt is a consciousness to our selves that we have done amiss, and the very thought that we have done amiss is apt to lye very cross in our minds and to cause great anguish and confusion. Besides that guilt is always attended with Fear, which naturally springs up in the mind of man from a secret apprehension of the mischief and inconvenience that his sin will bring upon him, and of the vengeance that hangs over him from God, and will overtake him either in this World, or in the other.

And tho the sinner, while he is in full health and prosperity, may make a shift to divert and shake off these Fears; yet they frequently return upon him, and upon every little noise of danger, upon the apprehension of any calamity that comes near him, his guilty mind is presently jealous that it is making towards him and is particularly levelled against him. For he is sensible that there is a just power above him to whose indignation he is continually liable, and therefore he is always in fear of him, and how long soever he may have escaped punishment in this world he cannot but dread the vengeance of the other; And these thoughts are a continual disturbance to his mind and *in the midst of laughter make his heart heavy*, and the longer he continues in a wicked course the more he multiplies the grounds and causes of his fears.

But now Religion frees a man from all this torment, either by preventing the cause of it, or directing to the cure; either by preserving us from guilt, or clearing us of it in case we have contracted it. It preserves us from guilt by keeping us innocent; and in case we have offended, it clears us of it by leading us to repentance and the amendment of our lives; which is the only way to recover the favour of God and the peace of our own consciences, and to secure us against all apprehension of danger from the divine Justice; tho not absolutely from all fear of punishment in this world, yet from that which is the greatest danger of all, the condemnation and torment of the world to come. And by this means a man's mind is setled in perfect peace, Religion freeing him from those tormenting fears of the Divine displeasure, which he can upon no other terms rid himself of; whereas the sinner is always sowing the seeds of trouble in his own mind, and laying the foundation of continual discontent to himself.

Secondly, As Religion removes the chief grounds of trouble and disquiet, so it *ministers to us all the true causes of peace and tranquility of mind.* Whoever lives according to the Rules of Religion lays these three great foundations of peace and comfort to himself.

1. He is satisfied that in being religious he doth that which is most reasonable.

2. That he secures himself against the greatest mischiefs and dangers by making God his Friend.

3. That upon the whole matter he does in all respects most effectually consult and promote his own interest and happiness.

1. He

1. He is satisfied that he does that which is most reasonable. And it is no small pleasure to be justified to our selves, to be satisfied that we are what we ought to be, and do what in reason we ought to do; that which best becomes us, and which according to the primitive intention of our Being is most natural, for whatever is natural is pleasant. Now the practice of piety towards God, and of every other grace and virtue which Religion teaches us, are things reasonable in themselves, and what God when he made us intended we should do. And a man is then pleased with himself and his own actions, when he doth what he is convinced he ought to do; and is then offended with himself, when he goes against the light of his own mind by neglecting his duty or doing contrary to it; for then his conscience checks him, and there is something within him that is uneasy and puts him into disorder. As when a man eats or drinks any thing that is unwholsom it offends his stomach, and puts his body into an unnatural and a restless state.

For every thing is then at rest and peace when it is in that state in which Nature intended it to be, and being violently forced out of it, it is never quiet till it recover again. Now Religion and the practice of its virtue is the natural state of the soul, the condition to which God designed it. As God made man a Reasonable Creature, so all the acts of Religion are reasonable and suitable to our nature: And our souls are then in health when we are what the Laws of Religion require us to be, and do what they command us to do. And as we find an unexpressible ease and pleasure when our body is in its perfect state of health, and on the contrary every distemper causeth pain and uneasiness; so is it with the Soul. When Religion governs all our inclinations and actions, and the temper of our minds and the course of our lives is conformable to the precepts of it, all is at peace. But when we are otherwise, and live in any vicious practice, how can there be peace; so long as we act unreasonably, and do those things whereby we necessarily create trouble and disturbance to our selves? How can we hope to be at ease so long as we are in a sick and diseased condition? Till the corruption that is in us be wrought out, our spirits will be in a perpetual tumult and fermentation; and it is as impossible for us to enjoy the peace and serenity of our minds as it is for a sick man to be at ease: The man may use what arts of diversion he will, and change from one place and posture to another; but still he is restless, because there is that within him gives him pain and disturbance, *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* Such men may dissemble their condition, and put on the face and appearance of pleasantness and contentment; but God who sees all the secrets of mens hearts, knows it is far otherwise with them, *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

2. Another ground of peace which the Religious man hath is, That he hath made God his Friend. Now Friendship is peace and pleasure both; It is mutual love, and that is a double pleasure; And it is hard to say which is the greatest, the pleasure of loving God, or of knowing that he loves us. Now whoever sincerely endeavours to please God may rest perfectly assured that God hath no displeasure against him; for *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance shall behold the upright*; that is, he will be favourable to such persons. As *he hates the workers of iniquity,* so *he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in such as keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.*

And being assured of his favour, we are secured against the greatest dangers and the greatest fears; and may say with *David, Return then unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lod hath dealt bountifully with thee: The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life,* of

of whom shall I be afraid? What can reasonably trouble or discontent that man who hath made his peace with God and is restored to his favour, who is the best and most powerful friend, and can be the sorest and most dangerous enemy in the whole world?

3. By being religious we do most effectually consult our own interest and happiness. A great part of Religion consists in moderating our appetites and passions, and this naturally tends to the composure of our minds. He that lives piously and virtuously acts according to Reason, and in so doing maintains the present peace of his own mind; and not only so, but he lays the foundation of his future happiness to all eternity. For Religion gives a man the hopes of Eternal life; and all pleasure does not consist in present enjoyment; there is a mighty pleasure also, in the firm belief and expectation of a future good; and if it be a great and lasting good, it will support a man under a great many present evils. If Religion be certainly the way to avoid the greatest evils, and to bring us to happiness at last, we may contentedly bear a great many afflictions for its sake. For though all sufferings be grievous yet it is pleasant to escape great dangers, and to come to the possession of a mighty good; tho it be with great difficulty and inconvenience to our selves. And when we come to heaven (if ever we be so happy as to get thither) it will be a new and greater pleasure to us to remember the pains and troubles whereby we were saved and made happy.

So that all these put together are a firm foundation of peace and comfort to a good man. There is a great satisfaction in the very doing of our duty and acting reasonably, tho there may happen to be some present trouble and inconvenience in it. But when we do not only satisfy our selves in so doing, but likewise please him whose favour is better than life, and whose frowns are more terrible than death; when in doing our duty we directly promote our own happiness, and in serving God do most effectually serve our own interest, what can be imagined to minister more peace and pleasure to the mind of man?

This is the *second thing*. Religion furnishes us with all the true causes of peace and tranquility of mind.

Thirdly, the reflection upon a religious and virtuous course of life doth afterwards yield a mighty pleasure and satisfaction. And what can commend Religion more to us, than that the remembrance of any pious and virtuous action gives us so much contentment and delight? So that whatever difficulty and reluctancy we may find in the doing of it, to be sure there is peace and satisfaction in the looking back upon it. No man ever reflected upon himself with regret for having done his duty to God or man; for having lived soberly, or righteously, or godly in this present world. Nay, on the contrary, the conscience of any duty faithfully discharged, the memory of any good we have done does refresh the soul with a strange kind of pleasure and joy, *Our rejoycing is this* (saith St. *Paul*) *the testimony of our consciences, that in all simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.*

But on the other side, the course of a vicious life, all acts of impiety to God, of malice and injustice to men, of intemperance and excess in reference to our selves, do certainly leave a sting behind them. And whatever pleasure there may be in the present act of them, the memory of them is so tormenting that men are glad to use all the arts of diversion to fence off the thoughts of them. One of the greatest troubles in the world to a bad man is to look into himself, and to remember how he hath lived. I appeal to the consciences of men whether this be not true.

And is not here now a mighty difference between these two courses of life; that when we do any thing that is good, if there be any trouble in it it is soon over, but the pleasure of it is perpetual: when we do a wicked action the pleasure of it is short and transient, but the trouble and sting of it remains for ever? The reflection upon the good we have done gives a lasting satisfaction to our minds, but the remembrance of any evil committed by us leaves a perpetual discontent.

And, which is yet more considerable, a religious and virtuous course of life does then yield most peace and comfort when we most stand in need of it; in times of affliction and at the hour of death. When a man falls into any great calamity there is no comfort in the world like to that of a good conscience; This makes all calm and serene within when there is nothing but clouds and darkness about him. So *David* observes of the good man, Psal. 112. 4. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.* All the pious and virtuous actions that we do are so many seeds of peace and comfort, sown in our consciences, which will spring up and flourish most in times of outward trouble and distress, *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* And at the hour of death; *The righteous hath hopes in his death*, saith *Solomon.* And what a seasonable refreshment is it to the mind of man when the pangs of death are ready to take hold of him, and he is just stepping into the other world, to be able to look back with satisfaction upon a religious and well-spent life? Then if ever, the comforts of a good man do overflow, and a kind of heaven springs up in his mind, and he rejoiceth in the hopes of the glory of God. And that is a true and solid comfort indeed, which will stand by us in the day of adversity, and stick close to us when we have most need of it.

But with the ungodly it is not so: His guilt lies in wait for him, especially against such times; and is never more fierce and raging than in the day of distress; so that according as his troubles without are multiplied, so are his stings within. And surely affliction is then grievous indeed when it falls upon a gall'd and uneasy mind. Were it not for this, outward afflictions might be tolerable; the *spirit of a man might bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* But especially at the hour of death. How does the guilt of his wicked life then stare him in the face? What storms and tempests are raised in his soul? which make it like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. When Eternity, that fearful and amazing sight presents its self to his mind, and he feels himself sinking into the regions of darkness, and is every moment in a fearful expectation of meeting with the just reward of his deeds; with what regret does he then remember the sins of his life? and how full of rage and indignation is he against himself for having neglected to know, when he had so many opportunities of knowing them, the things that belong to his peace; and which, because he hath neglected them, are now and likely to be for ever hid from his eyes?

And if this be the true case of the righteous and wicked man, I need not multiply words, but may leave it to any man's thoughts in which of these conditions he would be. And surely the difference between them is so very plain that there can be no difficulty in the choice.

But now tho this discourse be very true, yet for the full clearing of this matter it will be but fair to consider what may be said on the other side; And the rather, because there are several objections which seem to be countenanced from experience, which is enough to overthrow the most plausible speculations. As

1. That wicked men seem to have a great deal of pleasure and contentment in their Vices.

2. That Religion imposeth many harsh and grievous things, which seem to be inconsistent with that pleasure and satisfaction I have spoken of.

3. That those who are Religious are many times very disconsolate and full of trouble.

To the *first*, I deny not that wicked men have some pleasure in their vices; but when all things are rightly computed, and just abatements made, it will amount to very little. For it is the lowest and meanest kind of pleasure, it is chiefly the pleasure of our bodies and our senses, of our worst part; the pleasure of the beast, and not of the man; that which least becomes us, and which we were least of all made for. Those sensual pleasures which are lawful are much inferior to the least satisfaction of the mind, and when they are unlawful they are always inconsistent with it. And *what is a man profited*, if to gain a little sensual pleasure he lose the peace of his soul? Can we find in our hearts to call that pleasure which robs us of a far greater and higher satisfaction than it brings? The delights of sense are so far from being the chief pleasure for which God designed us, that on the contrary he intended we shou'd take our chief pleasure in the restraining and moderating of our sensual appetites and desires, and in keeping them within the bounds of Reason and Religion.

And then, It is not a lasting pleasure. Those fits of mirth which wicked men have, how soon are they over? Like a sudden blaze which after a little flash and noise is presently gone. It is the comparison of a very great and experienc'd man in these matters; *Like the cracking of thorns under a pot* (saith *Solomon*) *so is the laughter of the fool*, that is, the mirth of the wicked man; it may be loud, but it lasts not.

But, which is most considerable of all, the pleasures of sin bear no proportion to that long and black train of miseries and inconveniences which they draw after them. Many times poverty and reproach, pains and diseases upon our bodies, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.* So that if these pleasures were greater than they are, a man had better be without them than purchase them at such dear rates.

To the *second*. That Religion imposeth many harsh and grievous things, which seem to be inconsistent with that pleasure and satisfaction I have spoken of: As, the bearing of persecution, repentance and mortification, fasting and abstinence, and many other rigors and severities. As to persecution; This Discourse doth not pretend that Religion exempts men from outward troubles, but that, when they happen, it supports men under them better than any thing else. As for Repentance and Mortification; this chiefly concerns our first entrance into Religion after a wicked life, which I acknowledged in the beginning of this discourse to be very grievous; but this doth not hinder but that tho Religion may be troublesome at first to some persons whose former sins and crimes have made it so, it may be pleasant afterwards when we are accustomed to it. And whatever the trouble of repentance be, it is unavoidable, unless we resolve to be miserable; for *except we repent we must perish.* Now there is always a rational satisfaction in submitting to a less inconvenience to remedy and prevent a greater. As for Fasting and Abstinence, which is many times very helpful and subservient to the ends of Religion, there is no such extraordinary trouble in it if it be discreetly managed as is worth the speaking of. And as for other rigors and severities which some pretend Religion does impose, I have only this to say, that if men will play the fool, and make Religion more troublesome than God hath

made it, I cannot help that: And, that this is a falſe Repreſentation of Religion which ſome in the World have made, as if it did chiefly conſiſt not in pleaſing God, but in diſpleaſing and tormenting our ſelves. This is not to paint Religion like her ſelf, but rather like one of the *Furies*, with nothing but Whips and Snakes about her.

To the *third*. That thoſe who are religious are many times very diſconſolate and full of trouble. This, I confeſs is a great Objection indeed if Religion were the Cauſe of this Trouble, but there are other plain Cauſes of it, to which Religion rightly underſtood is not acceſſary. As, falſe and miſtaken Principles in Religion: The imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God: And a melancholy temper and diſpoſition. *Falſe and miſtaken principles in Religion.* As this for one; That God does not ſincerely deſire the Salvation of Men, but hath from all eternity effectually barr'd the greateſt part of mankind from all poſſibility of attaining that happineſs which he offers to them; and every one hath cauſe to fear that he may be in that number. This were a melancholy conſideration indeed, if it were true; but there is no ground either from Reaſon or Scripture to entertain any ſuch thought of God. Our *deſtruction is of our ſelves*; and no man ſhall be ruin'd by any decree of God who does not ruin himſelf by his own fault.

Or elſe, *the imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God.* Some perhaps are very devout in ſerving God, but not ſo kind and charitable, ſo juſt and honeſt in their dealings with men. No wonder if ſuch perſons be diſquieted; the natural conſciences of men being not more apt to diſquiet them for any thing, than for the neglect of thoſe moral duties, which natural light teacheth them. Peace of conſcience is the effect of an impartial and univerſal obedience to the Laws of God; and I hope no man will blame Religion for that which plainly proceeds from the want of Religion.

Or laſtly, *A melancholy temper and diſpoſition*; which is not from Religion, but from our nature and conſtitution; and therefore Religion ought not to be charged with it.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as briefly and plainly as I cou'd, to repreſent to you what peace and pleaſure, what comfort and ſatisfaction, Religion rightly underſtood and ſincerely practiſed is apt to bring to the minds of Men. And I do not know by what ſort of Argument Religion can be more effectually recommended to wiſe and conſiderate men. For in perſuading men to be religious I do not go about to rob them of any true pleaſure and contentment, but to direct them to the very beſt, nay indeed the only way of attaining and ſecuring it.

I ſpeak this in great pity and compaſſion to thoſe who make it their great deſign to pleaſe themſelves, but do grievouſly miſtake the way to it. The direct way is that which I have ſet before you, a holy and virtuous life, *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in this preſent world. A good man* (ſaith *Solomon*) *is ſatisfied from himſelf*: He hath the pleaſure of being wiſe and acting reaſonably; the pleaſure of being juſtified to himſelf in what he doth, and of being acquitted by the ſentence of his own mind. There is a great pleaſure in being innocent, becauſe that prevents guilt and trouble: It is pleaſant to be virtuous and good, becauſe that is to excel many others; and it is pleaſant to grow better, becauſe that is to excel our ſelves: Nay it is pleaſant even to mortify and ſubdue our luſts, becauſe that is Victory: It is pleaſant to command our appetites and paſſions, and to keep them in due order, within the bounds of Reaſon and Religion; becauſe this is a kind of Empire, this is to govern. It is naturally pleaſant to rule and have power over others, but he is the great and the abſo-

lute Prince who commands himſelf. This is *the kingdom of God within us*, a dominion infinitely to be preferred before all *the Kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them.* It is the *Kingdom of God* deſcribed by the *Apoſtle*, *which* conſiſts *in righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* In a word, the pleaſure of being good and of doing good is the chief happineſs of God himſelf.

But now the wicked man deprives himſelf of all this pleaſure, and creates perpetual diſcontent to his own mind. O the torments of a guilty conſcience! which the ſinner feels more or leſs all his life long. But, alas, thou doſt not yet know the worſt of it, no not in this world. What wilt thou do when thou comeſt to die? What comfort wilt thou then be able to give thy ſelf? or what comfort can any one elſe give thee, when thy conſcience is miſerably rent and torn by thoſe waking furies which will then rage in thy breaſt, and thou knoweſt not which way to turn thy ſelf for eaſe; then, perhaps at laſt, the Prieſt is unwillingly ſent for, to patch up thy conſcience as well as he can, and to appeaſe the cries of it; and to force himſelf out of very pity and good nature *to ſay peace, peace, when there is no peace.* But alas man! what can we do? what comfort can we give thee, when thine iniquities teſtify againſt thee to thy very face? *How can there be peace*, when thy luſts and debaucheries, thy impieties to God and thy injuries to men have been ſo many? *How can there be peace*, when thy whole life hath been a continued contempt and provocation of Almighty God, and a perpetual violence and affront to the light and reaſon of thy own mind?

Therefore whatever temptation there may be in ſin at a diſtance, whatever pleaſure in the act and commiſſion of it, yet remember that it always goes off with trouble, and *will be bitterneſs in the end.* Thoſe words of *Solomon* have a terrible ſting in the concluſion of them, *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the ſight of thine Eyes; but know that for all theſe things God will bring thee into judgment.*

This one thought which will very often unavoidably break into our minds (that *God will bring us into judgment*) is enough to daſh all our contentment, and to ſpoil all the pleaſure of a ſinful life. Never expect to be quiet in thine own mind, and to have the true enjoyment of thy ſelf till thou liveſt a virtuous and religious life.

And if this diſcourſe be true (as I am confident I have every man's conſcience on my ſide) I ſay, if this be true, let us venture to be wiſe and happy, that is, to be religious. Let us reſolve to *break off our ſins by repentance*, to *fear God and keep his Commandments*, as ever we deſire to avoid the unſpeakable torments of a guilty mind, and wou'd not be perpetually uneaſy to our ſelves.

Grant, we beſeech thee, Almighty God, that we may every one of us know and do in this our day the things that belong to our peace before they be hid from our eyes. And the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, by the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us always that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

The Nature and Benefit of Confideration.

PSAL. CXIX. 59.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teftimonies.

THE two great caufes of the ruin of men are *Infidelity*, and *want of confideration*. Some do not believe the principles of Religion, or at leaft have by arguing againft them rendred them fo doubtful to themfelves as to take away the force and efficacy of them: But thefe are but a very fmall part of mankind, in comparifon of thofe who perifh for want of confidering thefe things. For moft men take the principles of Religion for granted, *That there is a God*, and a *Providence*, and a *State of Rewards and Punifhments after this Life*, and never entertained any confiderable doubt in their minds to the contrary: but for all this they never attended to the proper and natural confequences of thefe principles, nor applied them to their own cafe; they never ferioufly confider'd the notorious inconfiftency of their lives with this belief, and what manner of perfons they ought to be who are verily perfuaded of the truth of thefe things.

For no man that is convinced that there is a God, and confiders the neceffary and immediate confequences of fuch a perfuafion, can think it fafe to affront Him by a wicked life: No man that believes the infinite happinefs and mifery of another world, and confiders withal that one of thefe fhall certainly be his portion according as he demeans himfelf in this prefent life, can think it indifferent what courfe he takes. Men may thruft away thefe thoughts and keep them out of their minds for a long time, but no man that enters into the ferious confideration of thefe matters can poffibly think it a thing indifferent to him whether he be happy or miferable for ever.

So that a great part of the evils of mens lives would be cured, if they would but once lay them to heart; would they but ferioufly confider the confequences of a wicked life, they would fee fo plain reafon and fo urgent a neceffity for the reforming of it, that they wou'd not venture to continue any longer in it. This courfe *David* took here in the Text, and he found the happy fuccefs of it; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy Teftimonies.*

In which words there are thefe two things confiderable.

I. The courfe which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.*

II. The fuccefs of this courfe. It produced actual and fpeedy reformation; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teftimonies; I made hafte and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

Thefe are the two heads of my following difcourfe, which when I have fpoken to I fhall endeavour to perfuade my felf and you to take the fame

course which *David* here did, and God grant that I may have the same effect.

I. We will consider *the course which* David here *took* for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways*, or, as the words are render'd in our old Translation, *I called my own ways to remembrance*. And this may either signify a general survey and examination of his life, respecting indifferently the good or bad actions of it: Or else, which is more probable, it may specially refer to the sins and miscarriages of his life; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my sins to remembrance. Neither of these senses can be much amiss in order to the effect mentioned in the Text, the reformation and amendment of our lives; and therefore neither of them can reasonably be excluded, though I shall principally insist upon the latter.

1. This *thinking on our ways* may signify a general survey and examination of our lives; respecting indifferently our good and bad actions. For *Way* is a Metaphorical word, denoting the course of a man's life and actions. *I thought on my ways*, that is, I examined my life, and called my self to a strict account for the actions of it; I compared them with the Law of God the rule and measure of my duty, and consider'd how far I had obeyed that Law, or offended against it; how much evil I had been guilty of, and how little good I had done in comparison of what I might and ought to have done: That by this means I might come to understand the true state and condition of my soul and discerning how many and great my faults and defects were, I might amend whatever was amiss, and be more careful of my duty for the future.

And it must needs be a thing of excellent use for men to set apart some particular times for the examination of themselves, that they may know how accounts stand between God and them. *Pythagoras* (or whoever were the Author of those *golden verses* which pass under his name) doth especially recommend this practice to his Scholars, every night before they slept to call themselves to account for the actions of the day past; enquiring wherein they had transgressed, what good they had done that day, or omitted to do. And this no doubt is an admirable means to improve men in virtue, a most effectual way to keep our consciences continually waking and tender, and to make us stand in awe of our selves, and afraid to sin when we know beforehand that we must give so severe an account of our selves of every action.

And certainly it is a great piece of wisdom to make up our accounts as frequently as we can, that our repentance may in some measure keep pace with the errors and failings of our lives, and that we may not be oppressed and confounded by the insupportable weight of the sins of a whole life falling upon us at once; and that perhaps at the very worst time, when we are sick and weak, and have neither understanding nor leisure to recollect our selves, and to call our sins distinctly to remembrance, much less to exercise any fit and proper acts of repentance for them. For there is nothing to be done in Religion when our Reason is once departed from us; then darkness hath overtaken us indeed, and *the night is come when no man can work*. But tho we were never so sensible and should do all we can at that time, yet after all this how it will go with us God alone knows. I am sure it is too much presumption for any man to be confident that one general and confused act of repentance will serve his turn for the sins of his whole life. Therefore there is great reason why we shou'd often examine our selves, both in order to the amendment of our lives, and the ease of our consciences when we come to die.

2. This

2. This *thinking of our ways* may particularly and ſpecially refer to the ſins and miſcarriages of our lives: *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my ſins to remembaance; I took a particular account of the errors of my life, and laid them ſeriouſly to heart; I conſidered all the circumſtances and conſequences of them, and all other things belonging to them; and reaſoning the matter throughly with my ſelf, came to a peremptory and fix'd reſolution of breaking off this wicked courſe of life, and betaking my ſelf to the obedience of God's Laws. And the *conſideration of our ways* taken in this ſenſe (which ſeems to be the more probable meaning of the words) may reaſonably imply in it theſe following particulars.

1. The taking of a particular account of our ſins, together with the ſeveral circumſtances and aggravations of them.

2. A hearty trouble and ſorrow for them; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid them ſadly to heart.

3. A ſerious conſideration of the evil and unreaſonableneſs of a ſinful courſe.

4. A due ſenſe of the fearful and fatal conſequences of a wicked life.

5. A full conviction of the neceſſity of quitting this courſe.

6. An apprehenſion of the poſſibility of doing this.

1. *The taking of a particular account of our ſins, together with the ſeveral circumſtances and aggravations of them.* And to this end we may do well to reflect particularly upon the ſeveral ſtages and periods of our lives, and to recollect at leaſt the principal miſcarriages belonging to each of them. And the better to enable us hereto it will be uſeful to have before our eyes ſome abridgment or ſummary of the Laws of God, containing the chief heads of our duties and ſins, of virtues and vices; For this will help to bring many of our faults and neglects to our remembrance, which otherwiſe perhaps would have been forgotten by us. We ſhould likewiſe conſider the ſeveral relations wherein we have ſtood to others, and how far we have tranſgreſſed or fail'd of our duty in any of theſe reſpects.

And having thus far made up our ſad account, we may in a great meaſure underſtand the number and greatneſs of our ſins; abating for ſome particulars which are ſlipt out of our memory, and for ſins of ignorance, and daily infirmities which are innumerable. By all which we may ſee what vile wretches and grievous offenders we have been; eſpecially if we take into conſideration the ſeveral heavy circumſtances of our ſins, which do above meaſure aggravate them; the heinouſneſs of many of them as to their nature, and the injurious conſequences of them to the perſon, or eſtate, or reputation of our neighbour; their having been committed againſt the clear knowledge of our duty, againſt the frequent checks and convictions of our conſciences, telling us when we did them that we did amiſs; againſt ſo many motions and ſuggeſtions of God's Holy-Spirit, ſo many admonitions and reproofs from others; and contrary to our own moſt ſerious vows and reſolutions, renewed at ſeveral times, eſpecially upon the receiving of the bleſſed Sacrament, and in times of ſickneſs and diſtreſs: And all this notwithſtanding the plaineſt declarations of God's will to the contrary; notwithſtanding the terrors of the Lord and the wrath of God revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men; notwithſtanding the cruel ſufferings of the Son of God for our ſins, and the moſt merciful offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood. Add to this the ſcandal of our wicked lives to our holy Religion, the ill example of them to the corrupting and debauching of others, the affront of them to the Divine Authority,

thority, and the horrible ingratitude of them to the mercy and goodneſs and patience of God to which we have ſuch infinite obligations. Thus we ſhould ſet our ſins in order before our eyes with the ſeveral aggravations of them.

2. A hearty *trouble* and *ſorrow* for ſin; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid my ſins ſadly to heart. And ſurely whenever we remember the faults and follies of our lives we cannot but be inwardly touched and ſenſibly grieved at the thoughts of them; we cannot but hang down our heads, and ſmite upon our breaſts, and be in pain and heavineſs at our very hearts. I know that the tempers of men are very different, and therefore I do not ſay that tears are abſolutely neceſſary to repentance, but they do very well become it; and a thorough ſenſe of ſin will almoſt melt the moſt hard and obdurate diſpoſition, and fetch water out of a very Rock. To be ſure the conſideration of our ways ſhould cauſe inward trouble and confuſion in our minds. The leaſt we can do when we have done amiſs is to be ſorry for it, to condemn our own folly, and to be full of indignation and diſpleaſure againſt our ſelves for what we have done, and to reſolve never to do the like again. And let us make ſure that our trouble and ſorrow for ſin have this effect, *to make us leave our ſins*; and then we ſhall need to be the leſs ſolicitous about the degrees and outward expreſſions of it.

3. *A ſerious conſideration of the evil and unreaſonableneſs of a ſinful courſe.* That ſin is the ſtain and blemiſh of our natures, the reproach of our reaſon and underſtanding, the diſeaſe and the deformity of our Souls, the great enemy of our peace, the cauſe of all our fears and troubles: That whenever we do a wicked action we go contrary to the cleareſt dictates of our reaſon and conſcience, to our plain and true intereſt, and to the ſtrongeſt ties and obligations of duty and gratitude. And which renders it yet more unreaſonable, ſin is a voluntary evil which men wilfully bring upon themſelves. Other evils may be forced upon us, whether we will or no; but no man is wicked and vicious but by his own choice. How do we betray our folly and weakneſs by ſuffering our ſelves to be hurried away by every fooliſh luſt and paſſion to do things which we know to be prejudicial and hurtful to our ſelves; and ſo baſe and unworthy in themſelves that we are aſhamed to do them, not only in the preſence of a wiſe man, but even of a child or a fool? So that if ſin were followed with no other puniſhment beſides the guilt of having done a ſhameful thing, a man wou'd not by intemperance make himſelf a fool and a beaſt; one wou'd not be falſe and unjuſt, treacherous or unthankful, if for no other reaſon, yet out of mere greatneſs and generoſity of mind, out of reſpect to the dignity of his nature, and out of very reverence to his own reaſon and underſtanding. For let witty men ſay what they will in defence of their Vices, there are ſo many natural acknowledgments of the evil and unreaſonableneſs of ſin that the matter is paſt all denial: Men are generally galled and uneaſy at the thoughts of an evil action, both before and after they have committed it; they are aſhamed to be taken in a Crime, and heartily vexed and provoked whenever they are upbraided with it; and 'tis very obſervable, that tho the greater part of the World always was bad, and vice hath ever had more ſervants and followers to cry it up, yet never was there any Age ſo degenerate, in which Vice cou'd get the better of Virtue in point of general eſteem and reputation: Even they whoſe wills have been moſt enſlaved to ſin, cou'd never yet ſo far bribe and corrupt their underſtandings as to make them give full approbation to it.

4. *A due ſenſe of the fearful and fatal conſequences of a wicked life.* And theſe are ſo ſad and dreadful, and the danger of them ſo evident and ſo perpetually

petually threatning us, that no temptation can be sufficient to excuse a man to himself and his own reason for venturing upon them. A principal point of wisdom is to look to the end of things; not only to consider the present pleasure and advantage of any thing, but also the ill consequences of it for the future, and to balance them one against the other.

Now sin in its own nature tends to make men miserable. It certainly causes trouble and disquiet of mind: And to a considerate man, that knows how to value the ease and satisfaction of his own mind, there cannot be a greater argument against sin than to consider that the forsaking of it is the only way to find rest to our souls.

Besides this, every vice is naturally attended with some particular mischief and inconvenience, which maketh it even in this life a punishment to it self; and commonly the Providence of God and his just Judgment upon Sinners strikes in to heighten the mischievous consequences of a sinful course. This we have represented in the Parable of the Prodigal; his riotous course of life did naturally and of it self bring him to want, but the providence of God likewise concurred to render his condition more miserable, *at the same time there arose a mighty Famine in the Land*; so that he did not only want wherewithal to supply himself, but was cut off from all hopes of relief from the abundance and superfluity of others. Sin brings many miseries upon us, and God many times sends more and greater than sin brings; and the further we go on in a sinful course, the more miseries and the greater difficulties we involve our selves in.

But all these are but light and inconsiderable in comparison of the dreadful miseries of another World; to the danger whereof every man that lives a wicked life does every moment expose himself: So that if we could conquer shame, and had stupidity enough to bear the infamy and reproach of our vices, and the upbraidings of our consciences for them, and the temporal mischiefs and inconveniences of them; tho for the present gratifying of our lusts we could brook and dispense with all these, yet the consideration of the end and issue of a sinful course is an invincible objection against it and never to be answered; tho the violence of our sensual appetites and inclinations should be able to bear down all temporal considerations whatsoever, yet methinks the interest of our everlasting happiness should lye near our hearts; the consideration of another world should mightily amaze and startle us; the horrors of eternal darkness, and the dismal thoughts of being miserable for ever shou'd effectually discourage any man from a wicked life. And this danger continually threatens the sinner, and may if God be not merciful to him happen to surprize him the next moment. And can we make too much haste to fly from so great and apparent a danger? When will we think of saving our selves, if not when (for ought we know) we are upon the very brink of ruin, and just ready to drop into destruction?

5. Upon this naturally follows *a full conviction of the necessity of quitting this wicked course*. And necessity is always a powerful and over-ruling argument, and doth rather compel than persuade: and after it is once evident leaves no place for further deliberation. And the greater the necessity is, it is still the more cogent argument. For whatever is necessary is so in order to some end, and the greater the end the greater is the necessity of the means without which that end cannot be obtained. Now the chief and last end of all Reasonable Creatures is happiness, and therefore whatever is necessary in order to that hath the highest degree of rational and moral necessity. We are not capable of happiness till we have left our sins, *for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

But tho Men are convinced of this neceffity, yet this doth not always enforce a prefent change; becaufe men hope they may continue in their fins, and remedy all at laft by repentance. But this is fo great a hazard in all refpects that there is no venturing upon it. And in matters of greateft concernment wife men will run no hazards if they can help it. *David* was fo fenfible of this danger, that he would not defer his repentance and the change of his life for one moment; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teftimonies: I made hafte and delayed not to keep thy Commandments. This* day, *this* hour for ought we know may be the laft opportunity of making our peace with God. Therefore we fhould make hafte out of this dangerous ftate as *Lot* did out of *Sodom*, left fire and brimftone overtake us. He that cannot promife himfelf the next moment hath a great deal of reafon to feize upon the prefent opportunity. While we are *lingring* in our fins, if God be not merciful to us we fhall be confumed. Therefore *make hafte* finner and *efcape for thy life, left evil overtake thee.*

6. Laftly, *An apprehenfion of the poffibility of making this change.* God who defigned us for happinefs at firft, and after we had made a forfeiture of it by fin was pleafed to reftore us again to the capacity of it by the Redemption of our bleffed Lord and Saviour, hath made nothing neceffary to our happinefs that is impoffible for us to do, either of our felves, or by the affiftance of that grace which he is ready to afford us if we heartily beg it of him. For that is poffible to us which we may do by the affiftance of another, if we may have that affiftance for asking: And God hath promifed to *give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.* So that notwithftanding the great corruption and weaknefs of our natures, fince the grace of God which brings falvation hath appeared, it is not abfolutely out of our power to leave our fins and to turn to God: For that may truly be faid to be in our power which God hath promifed to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to our felves.

So that there is nothing on God's part to hinder this change. He hath folemnly declared that he fincerely defires it, and that he is ready to affift our good refolutions to this purpofe. And moft certainly when he tells us, that *he hath no pleafure in the death of a finner, but rather that he fhould turn from his wickednefs and live*; that *he would have all men to be faved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; that *he would not that any fhould perifh, but that all fhould come to repentance:* He means plainly as he faith, and doth not fpeak to us with any private referve or nice diftinction between his fecret and revealed will, that is, he doth not decree one thing and declare the contrary. So far is it from this, that if a finner entertain ferious thoughts of returning to God, and do but once move towards him, how ready is he to receive him! This is in a very lively manner defcribed to us in the Parable of the *Prodigal Son*, who when he was returning home, and *was yet a great way off* what hafte doth his Father make to meet him? *he faw him and had compaffion and ran.* And if there be no impediment on God's part, why fhould there be any on ours? One would think all the doubt and difficulty fhould be on the other fide, Whether God would be pleafed to fhew mercy to fuch great offenders as we have been. But the bufinefs doth not ftick there. And will we be miferable by our own choice, when the Grace of God hath put it into our power to be happy? I have done with the firft thing, the courfe which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.* I proceed to the

II. *The fuccefs of this courfe.* It produced actual and fpeedy reformation. *I turned my feet unto thy teftimonies; I made hafte, and delayed not to keep thy*

Commandments. And if we consider the matter throughly and have but patience to reason out the case with our selves and to bring our thoughts and deliberations to some issue, the conclusion must naturally be the quitting of that evil and dangerous course in which we have lived. For sin and consideration cannot long dwell together. Did but men consider what sin is, they would have so many unanswerable Objections against it, such strong fears and jealousies of the miserable issue and event of a wicked life, that they would not dare to continue any longer in it.

I do not say that this change is perfectly made at once. A state of sin and holiness are not like two ways that are just parted by a line, so as a man may step out of the one full into the other; but they are like two Ways that lead to two very distant places, and consequently are at a good distance from one another, and the farther any man hath travelled in the one the farther he is from the other; so that it requires time and pains to pass from the one to the other; It sometimes so happens, that some persons are by a mighty conviction and resolution, and by a very extraordinary and overpowering degree of God's grace, almost perfectly reclaimed from their sins at once, and all of a sudden *translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of his dear Son.* And thus it was with many of the first Converts to Christianity; as their prejudices against the Christian Religion were strong and violent, so the holy Spirit of God was pleased to work mightily in them that believed. But in the usual and settled methods of God's grace evil habits are mastered and subdued by degrees, and with a great deal of conflict, and many times after they are routed they rally and make head again; and 'tis a great while before the contrary habits of grace and virtue are grown up to any considerable degree of strength and maturity, and before a man come to that confirm'd state of goodness that he may be said to have conquer'd and mortified his lusts. But yet this ought not to discourage us. For so soon as we have seriously begun this change we are in a good way, and all our endeavours will have the acceptance of good beginnings, and God will be ready to help us; and if we pursue our advantages we shall every day gain ground, and the work will grow easier upon our hands; and we who moved at first with so much slowness and difficulty, shall after a while be enabled to run the ways of God's Commandments with pleasure and delight.

I have done with the two things I propounded to speak to from these words, This *course* here prescribed, and the *success* of it. And now to persuade men to take this *course*, I shall offer two or three Arguments.

1. That Consideration is the proper act of Reasonable Creatures. This argument God himself uses, to bring men to a consideration of their evil ways, *Isa.* 46. 8. *Remember, and shew your selves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.* To consider our ways and to call our sins to remembrance, is to shew our selves men. 'Tis the great fault and infelicity of a great many, that they generally live without thinking, and are acted by their present inclinations and appetites without any consideration of the future consequences of things, and without fear of any thing but of a present and sensible danger; like Brute Creatures, who fear no evils but what are in view and just ready to fall upon them: Whereas to a prudent and considerate man a good or evil in reversion is capable of as true an estimation, proportionably to the greatness and distance of it, as if it were really present. And what do we think God has given us our reason and understandings for, but to foresee evils at a distance, and to prevent them; to provide for our future security and happiness, to look up *to God our Maker, who hath taught us more*

than the Beasts of the earth, and made us wiser than the Fowls of heaven; but to consider what we do, and what we ought to do, and what makes most for our future and lasting interest, and what against it? What can a Beast do worse than to act without any consideration and design, than to pursue his present inclination without any apprehension of true danger? The most dull and stupid of all the brute Creatures can hardly exercise less reason than this comes to. So that for a man not to consider his ways is to the very best intents and purposes to be *without understanding, and like the beasts that perish.*

2. This is the end of God's patience and long suffering towards us, to bring us to consideration, the great design of God's *goodness* is to *lead men to repentance. He winks at the sins of men, that they may repent.* He bears long with us, and delays the punishment of our sins, and doth not execute judgment speedily, because he is loth to surprize men into destruction; because he would give them the liberty of second thoughts, time to reflect upon themselves, and to consider what they have done, and to reason themselves into repentance. *Consider this all ye that forget God, lest* his patience turn into fury, and *he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.*

3. Consideration is that which we must all come to one time or other. Time will come when we shall consider and cannot help it, when we shall not be able to divert our thoughts from those things which we are now so loth to think upon. Our Consciences will take their opportunity to bring our ways to remembrance, when some great calamity or affliction is upon us. Thus it was with the Prodigal, when he was brought to the very last extremity and *was ready to perish with hunger*, then *he came to himself.* When we come to die, then we shall think of our ways with trouble and vexation enough; and how glad wou'd we then be that we had time to consider them? And perhaps while we are wishing for more time Eternity will swallow us up. To be sure in the other world, a great part of the misery of wicked men will consist in furious reflections upon themselves and the evil actions of their lives. 'Tis said of the *Rich* voluptuous man in the *Parable*, that *in hell he lift up his eyes being in torment*; as if he had never considered and bethought himself till that time. But alas! it will then be too late to consider: For then consideration will do us no good; it will serve to no other purpose but to aggravate our misery, and to multiply our stings, and to give new life and rage to those Vultures which will perpetually prey upon our hearts. But how much a wiser course wou'd it be to consider these things in time, in order to our eternal peace and comfort; to think of them while we may redress them and avoid the dismal consequences of them, than when our case is desperate and past remedy?

And now what can I say more to persuade every one of us to a consideration of our *own ways*? We are generally apt to busy our selves in observing the errors and miscarriages of our Neighbours, and are forward to mark and censure the faults and follies of other men; but how few descend into themselves, and turn their eyes inward, and say, *What have I done?* 'Tis an excellent saying of *Antoninus* the great *Emperor* and *Philosopher*, *No man was ever unhappy for not prying into the actions and conditions of other men, but that man is necessarily unhappy who doth not observe himself, and consider the state of his own soul.*

This is our proper work; and *now* is a proper season for it, when we pretend to God and men to set apart a solemn time for the examination of our selves, and for a serious review of our lives in order to humiliation and repentance, to the reforming and amendment of what is amiss. And tho we would venture to dissemble with men, yet let us not dissemble with

God alſo; *For ſhall not he that pondereth the heart conſider it; and he that keepeth the ſoul, ſhall not he know it; and ſhall not he render to every man according to his ways?*

I know it is a very unpleaſant work which I am now putting you upon, and therefore no wonder that men are generally ſo backward to it; becauſe it will of neceſſity give ſome preſent diſturbance to their minds. They whoſe lives have been very vicious, are ſo odious a ſight, ſo horrid a ſpectacle to themſelves, that they cannot endure to reflect upon their own ways; of all things in the world they hate Conſideration, and are ready to ſay to it as the evil Spirit did in the Goſpel to our Saviour, *What have I to do with thee? Art thou come to torment me before the time?* But let not this affright us from it; for whatever trouble it may cauſe at preſent, it is the only way to prevent the anguiſh and the torments of Eternity.

The things which I have offer'd to your conſideration are of huge moment and importance. They do not concern your bodies and eſtates, but that which is more truly your ſelves, your immortal ſouls, the deareſt and moſt durable part of your ſelves: and they do not concern us for a little while, but for ever. Let me therefore beſpeak your moſt ſerious regard to them in the words of *Moſes* to the People of *Iſrael*, after he had ſet the Law of God before them, together with the bleſſings promiſed to obedience, and the terrible Curſe threatned to the tranſgreſſion of it, *Deut.* 32. 46. *Set your hearts to the words which I teſtify to you this day, for it is not a vain thing, becauſe it is your life. Your life*, your *eternal life* and happineſs depends upon it.

And beſides a tender regard to your ſelves and your own intereſts, which methinks every man out of a natural deſire of being happy and dread of being miſerable ſhould be forward enough to conſider: Be pleaſed likewiſe to lay to heart the influence of your example upon others. I ſpeak now to a great many perſons, the eminence of whoſe rank and quality renders their examples ſo powerful as to be able almoſt to give authority either to Virtue or Vice. People take their faſhions from you, as to the habits of their minds as well as their bodies. So that upon you chiefly depends the ruin or reformation of manners, our hopes or deſpair of a better world. What way ſoever you go you are followed by troops. If you run any ſinful or dangerous courſe, you cannot *periſh alone in your iniquity*, but *thouſands will fall by your ſide, and ten thouſands at your right hands:* And on the contrary, 'tis very much in your power, and I hope in your wills and deſigns, to be the ſovereign reſtorers of Piety and Virtue to a degenerate Age. It is *our* part indeed to exhort men to their duty, but 'tis *you* that would be the powerful and effectual preachers of righteouſneſs. We may endeavour to make men proſelytes to virtue, but you would infallibly draw diſciples after you: We may try to perſuade, but you could certainly prevail, either to make men good, or to reſtrain them from being ſo bad.

Therefore conſider your ways, for the ſake of others as well as your ſelves. Conſider what you have done, and then conſider what is fit for you to do, and if you do it not, what will be the end of theſe things. And to help you forward in this work it is not neceſſary that I ſhould rip up the vices of the Age, and ſet mens ſins in order before them. It is much better that you your ſelves ſhould call your own ways to remembrance. We have every one a faithful Monitor and Witneſs in our own breaſts, who, if we will but hearken to him, will deal impartially with us, and privately tell us the errors of our lives. To this Monitor I refer you, and to the grace of God to make theſe admonitions effectual.

Let

Let us then every one of us, in the fear of God, *search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.* Let us *take to our selves words, and say* to God with those true Penitents in Scripture, *I have sinned, what shall be done unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I will abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.* For *surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more; that which I know not teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity I will do no more. O that there were such an heart in us! O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end!* And God of his infinite mercy inspire into every one of our hearts this holy and happy resolution, for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

The Folly and Danger of Irresolution and Delaying.

PSAL. CXIX. 60.

I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

IN the words immediately going before, you have the Course which *David* took for the reforming of his life, and the success of that course; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.* A serious reflection upon the past errors and miscarriages of his life produced the reformation of it. And you have a considerable circumstance added in these words that I have now read to you, that this reformation was speedy and without delay, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* Upon due consideration of his former life, and a full conviction of the necessity of a change, he came to a resolution of a better life, and immediately put this resolution in execution; and to declare how presently and quickly he did it, he expresses it both affirmatively and negatively, after the manner of the *Hebrews,* who when they would say a thing with great certainty and *Emphasis,* are wont to express it both ways, *I made haste, and delayed not;* that is, I did with all imaginable speed betake my self to a better course.

And this is the natural effect of consideration; and the true cause why men delay so necessary a work is, because they stifle their reason and suffer themselves to be hurried into the embraces of present Objects, and do not consider their latter end, and what will be the sad issue and event of a wicked life. For if men would take an impartial view of their lives, and but now and then reflect upon themselves and lay to heart the miserable and fatal consequences of a sinful course, and think whither it will bring them at last, and that the end of these things will be death and misery: If the carnal and sensual person would but look about him, and consider how many have been ruin'd in the way that he is in, how many lie *slain and wounded in it, that it is the way to hell, and leads down to the chambers of death,* this would certainly give a check to him, and stop him in his course.

For it is not to be imagined but that *that* man who hath duly considered what sin is, the shortness of its pleasures, and the eternity of its punishment, should resolve immediately to break off his sins, and to live another kind of life. Would any Man be intemperate and walk after the flesh, would any man be unjust or defraud or oppress his Neighbour, be prophane and live in the contempt of God and Religion, or allow himself in any wicked course whatsoever, that considers and believes a Judgment to come, and that because of these things the terrible vengeance of God will one day fall upon the Children of Disobedience? It is not credible that men who apply themselves seriously to the meditation of these matters, should venture to continue in so imprudent and dangerous a course, or could by any temptation whatsoever

soever be trained on one step farther in a Way that does so certainly and visibly lead to ruin and destruction.

So that my Work at this time shall be, to endeavour to convince men of the monstrous folly and unreasonableness of delaying the reformation and amendment of their lives; and to persuade us to resolve upon it, and having resolved, to set about it immediately and without delay; in imitation of the good man here in the Text, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* And to this end, I shall

First, Consider the reasons and excuses which men pretend for delaying this necessary work, and shew the unreasonableness of them.

Secondly, I shall add some farther Considerations to engage us effectually to set about this work speedily and without delay.

I. We will consider a little the reasons and excuses which men pretend for delaying this necessary work; and not only shew the unreasonableness of them, but that they are each of them a strong reason and powerful Argument to the contrary.

1. Many pretend that they are abundantly convinced of the great necessity of leaving their sins and betaking themselves to a better course, and they fully intend to do so; only they cannot at present bring themselves to it, but they hope hereafter to be in a better temper and disposition, and then they resolve by God's grace to set about this work in good earnest, and to go through with it.

I know not whether it be fit to call this a Reason; I am sure it is the greatest cheat and delusion that any man can put upon himself. For this plainly shews that thou dost not intend to do this which thou art convinced is so necessary, but to put it off from day to day. For there is no greater evidence that a Man doth not really intend to do a thing, than when notwithstanding he ought upon all accounts and may in all respects better do it at present than hereafter, yet he still puts it off. Whatever thou pretendest, this is a mere shift to get rid of a present trouble. It is like giving good words and making fair promises to a clamorous and importunate creditor, and appointing him to come another day, when the man knows in his conscience that he intends not to pay him, and that he shall be less able to discharge the Debt then, than he is at present. Whatever reasons thou hast against reforming thy life now, will still remain, and be in as full force hereafter, nay probably stronger than they are at present. Thou art unwilling now, and so thou wilt be hereafter, and in all likelihood much more unwilling. So that this reason will every day improve upon thy hands, and have so much the more strength by how much the longer thou continuest in thy sins. Thou hast no reason in the world against the present time but only that 'tis *present*; why when hereafter comes to be present the reason will be just the same. So that thy present unwillingness is so far from being a just reason against it, that 'tis a good reason the other way; because thou art unwilling now, and like to be so, nay more so hereafter; if thou intendest to do it at all thou shouldest set about it immediately, and without delay.

2. Another reason which men pretend for the delaying of this work, is the great difficulty and unpleasantness of it. And it cannot be denied but that there will be some bitterness and uneasiness in it, proportionably to the growth of evil habits, and the strength of our lusts, and our greater or less progress and continuance in a sinful course: So that we must make account of a sharp conflict, of some pain and trouble in the making of this change, that it will cost us some pangs and throws before we be born again. For

when,

when nature hath been long bent another way, it is not to be expected that it ſhould be reduced and brought back to its firſt ſtraightneſs without pain and violence.

But then it is to be conſidered, that how difficult and painful ſoever this work be, *it is neceſſary,* and that ſhould over-rule all other conſiderations whatſoever; *that if we will not be at this pains and trouble, we muſt one time or other endure far greater than thoſe which we now ſeek to avoid;* that it is not ſo difficult as we imagine, but our fears of it are greater than the trouble will prove; if we were but once reſolved upon the Work, and ſeriouſly engaged in it, the greateſt part of the trouble were over; it is like the fear of children to go into the cold water, a faint trial increaſeth their fear and apprehenſion of it; but ſo ſoon as they have plunged into it the trouble is over, and then they wonder why they were ſo much afraid. The main difficulty and unpleaſantneſs is in our firſt entrance into Religion; it preſently grows tolerable, and ſoon after eaſie, and after that by degrees ſo pleaſant and delightful that the man would not for all the World return to his former evil ſtate and condition of life.

We ſhould conſider likewiſe what is the true cauſe of all this trouble and difficulty; 'Tis our long continuance in a ſinful courſe that hath made us ſo loth to leave it; 'Tis the cuſtom of ſinning that renders it ſo troubleſome and uneaſie to men to do otherwiſe: 'Tis the greatneſs of our guilt, heightned and inflamed by many and repeated provocations, that doth ſo gall our conſciences and fill our ſouls with ſo much terror: 'Tis becauſe we have gone ſo far in an evil way that our retreat is become ſo difficult, and becauſe we have delayed this work ſo long that we are now ſo unwilling to go about it; and conſequently, the longer we delay it the trouble and difficulty of a change will increaſe daily upon us. And all theſe conſiderations are ſo far from being a good reaſon for more delays, that they are a ſtrong argument to the contrary: Becauſe the work is difficult now, therefore do not make it more ſo; and becauſe your delays have increaſed the difficulty of it, and will do more and more, therefore delay no longer.

3. Another pretended encouragement to theſe delays, is the great mercy and patience of God. He commonly bears longer with ſinners, and therefore there is no ſuch abſolute and urgent neceſſity of a ſpeedy repentance and reformation of our lives. Men have not the face to give this for a reaſon, but yet for all that it lies at the bottom of many mens hearts: So *Solomon* tells us, *Eccleſ.* 8. 11. *Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the hearts of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil.*

But it is not always thus. There are few of us but have ſeen ſeveral inſtances of God's ſeverity to ſinners, and have known ſeveral perſons ſurprized by a ſudden hand of God, and cut off in the very act of ſin without having the leaſt reſpite given them, without time or liberty ſo much as to ask God forgiveneſs, and to conſider either what they had done, or whither they were going. And this may be the caſe of any Sinner, and is ſo much the more likely to be thy caſe, becauſe thou doſt ſo boldly preſume upon the mercy and patience of God.

But if it were always thus, and thou wert ſure to be ſpared yet a while longer; what can be more unreaſonable and diſingenuous than to reſolve to be evil becauſe God is good, and becauſe he ſuffers ſo long to ſin ſo much the longer, and becauſe he affords thee a ſpace of repentance therefore to delay it and put it off to the laſt? The proper deſign of God's goodneſs is to lead men to repentance, and he never intended his patience for an encouragement to men to continue in their ſins, but for an opportunity and an argument to break them off by repentance.

These are the pretended reasons and encouragements to men to delay their repentance and the reformation of their lives, and you see how groundless and unreasonable they are; which was the first thing I propounded to speak to.

II. I shall add some further considerations, to engage men *effectually to set about this work speedily, and without delay. And because they are many* I shall insist upon those which are most weighty and considerable, without being very curious and solicitous about the method and order of them: For provided they be but effectual to the end of persuasion, it matters not how inartificially the are ranged and disposed.

1. Consider, that in matters of great and necessary concernment, and which must be done, there is no greater argument of a weak and impotent mind than irresolution, to be undetermin'd where the case is so plain and the necessity so urgent, to be always about doing that which we are convinced must be done.

Victuros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam.

We are always intending to live a new life, but can never find a time to set about it. This is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping from one day and night to another, till he have starved and destroyed himself. It seldom falls under any man's deliberation whether he should live or not, if he can chuse; and if he cannot chuse, 'tis in vain to deliberate about it. It is much more absurd to deliberate whether we should live virtuously or religiously, soberly or righteously in the world, for that upon the matter is to consult whether a man should be happy or not; Nature hath determined this for us, and we need not reason about it; and consequently, we ought not to delay that which we are convinced is so necessary in order to it.

2. Consider that Religion is a great and a long work, and asks so much time that there is none left for the delaying of it. To begin with Repentance, which is commonly our first entrance into Religion: This alone is a great work, and is not only the business of a sudden thought and resolution but of execution and action: 'Tis the abandoning of a sinful course, which we cannot leave till we have in some degree mastered our lusts; for so long as they are our Masters, like *Pharaoh*, they will keep us in bondage and *not let us go to serve the Lord*. The habits of sin and vice are not to be pluck'd up and cast off at once; as they have been long in contracting, so without a miracle it will require a competent time to subdue them and get the victory over them; for they are conquered just by the same degrees that the habits of grace and virtue grow up and get strength in us.

So that there are several duties to be done in Religion, and often to be repeated; many graces and virtues are to be long practised and exercised before the contrary vices will be subdued, and before we arrive to a confirmed and settled state of goodness; such a state as can only give us a clear and comfortable evidence of the sincerity of our resolution and repentance, and of our good condition towards God. We have many lusts to mortify, many passions to govern and bring into order, much good to do, to make what amends and reparation we can for the much evil we have done: We have many things to learn; and many to unlearn, to which we shall be strongly prompted by the corrupt inclinations of our nature, and the remaining power of ill habits and customs: and perhaps we have satisfaction and restitution to make for the many injuries we have done to others, in their per-

ſons, or eſtates, or reputations: In a word, we have a *body of ſin* to put off, which clings cloſe to us and is hard to part with: we have to *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of God*; to increaſe and improve our graces and virtues; to *add to our faith knowledge*, and *temperance*, and *patience*, and *brotherly kindneſs*, and *charity*; and *to abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God*: We have to be uſeful to the world, and exemplary to others in a holy and virtuous converſation; our *light is ſo to ſhine before men, that others may ſee our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*

And do we think all this is to be done in an inſtant, and requires no time? That we may delay and put off to the laſt, and yet do all this work well enough? Do we think we can do all this in time of ſickneſs and old age, when we are not fit to do any thing; when *the ſpirit of a man* can hardly *bear the infirmities* of nature, much leſs a guilty conſcience and *a wounded ſpirit*? Do we think that when the day hath been idly ſpent and ſquandred away by us, that we ſhall be fit to work when the night and darkneſs comes? When our underſtanding is weak, and our memory frail, and our will crooked, and by a long cuſtom of ſinning obſtinately bent the wrong way, what can we then do in Religion? what reaſonable or acceptable ſervice can we then perform to God? When our candle is juſt ſinking into the ſocket, how ſhall *our light ſo ſhine before men, that others may ſee our good works*?

Alas! the longeſt life is no more than ſufficient for a man to reform himſelf in, to repent of the errors of his life, and to amend what is amiſs: to put our ſouls into a good poſture and preparation for another world, to train up our ſelves for eternity, and to make our ſelves *meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.*

3. Conſider what a deſperate hazard we run by theſe delays. Every delay of repentance is a venturing the main chance. It is uncertain whether hereafter we ſhall have time for it, and if we have time whether we ſhall have a heart to it, and the aſſiſtance of God's grace to go thorough with it. God indeed hath been graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe pardon to repentance; but he hath no where promiſed life and leiſure, the aids of his grace and holy Spirit to thoſe who put off their repentance; he hath no where promiſed acceptance to mere ſorrow and trouble for ſin, without *fruits meet for repentance, and amendment of life*: He hath no where promiſed to receive them to mercy and favour who only give him good words, and are at laſt contented to condeſcend ſo far to him as to promiſe to leave their ſins when they can keep them no longer. Many have gone thus far in times of affliction and ſickneſs, as to be awakened to a great ſenſe of their ſins, and to be mightily troubled for their wicked lives, and to make ſolemn promiſes and profeſſions of becoming better; and yet upon their deliverance and recovery all hath vaniſhed and come to nothing, and their *righteouſneſs hath been as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which paſſeth away*: And why ſhould any man, merely upon account of a death-bed repentance, reckon himſelf in a better condition than thoſe perſons who have done as much and gone as far as he; and there is no other difference between them but this, that the repentance of the former was tried, and proved inſincere, but the *death-bed repentance* never came to a trial; and yet for all that God knows whether it were ſincere or not, and how it would have proved if the man had lived longer. Why ſhould any man for offering up to God the mere refuſe and dregs of his life, and the days *which himſelf hath no pleaſure in*, expect to receive the reward of eternal life and happineſs at his hands?

But

But tho we do not design to delay this work so long, yet ought we to consider that all delays in a matter of this consequence are extreamly dangerous; because we put off a business of the greatest concernment to the future, and in so doing put it to the hazard whether ever it shall be done: For the future is as much out of our power to command, as it is to call back the time which is past. Indeed if we could arrest time and strike off the nimble wheels of his Chariot, and like *Joshua* bid the Sun stand still, and make opportunity tarry as long as he had occasion for it; this were something to excuse our delay, or at least to mitigate or abate the folly and unreasonableness of it: But this we cannot do. It is in our power, under the influence of God's grace and holy Spirit, to amend our lives now, but it is not in our power to live till to morrow; and who will part with an estate in hand, which he may presently enter upon the possession of, for an uncertain reversion; and yet thus we deal in the great and everlasting concernments of our souls; we trifle away the present opportunities of salvation, and vainly promise to our selves the future; we let go that which is in our power, and fondly dispose of that which is out of our power, and in the hands of God.

Lay hold then upon the present opportunities, and look upon every action thou dost, and every opportunity of doing any, as possibly thy last; for so it may prove, for any thing thou canst tell to the contrary. If a man's life lay at stake and he had but one throw for it, with what care and with what concernment would he manage that action? What thou art doing next may, for ought thou knowest be for thy life and for all eternity. So much of thy life is most certainly past, and God knows thou hast yet done little or nothing towards the securing of thy future happiness: It is not certain how much or how little is remaining, therefore be sure to make the best use of that little which may be left, and wisely to manage the last stake.

4. Seeing the delay of Repentance doth mainly rely upon the hopes and encouragement of a future repentance, let us consider a little how unreasonable these hopes are, and how absurd the encouragement is which men take from them. To sin in hopes that hereafter we shall repent, is to do a thing in hopes that we shall one day be mightily ashamed of it, that we shall one time or other be heartily grieved and troubled that we have done it: It is to do a thing in hopes that we shall afterwards condemn our selves for it, and wish a thousand times we had never done it; in hopes that we shall be full of horror at the thoughts of what we have done, and shall treasure up so much guilt in our consciences as will make us a terror to our selves, and be ready to drive us even to despair and distraction. And is this a reasonable hope? Is this a fitting encouragement for a wise man to give to himself, to any action? And yet this is plainly the true meaning of mens going on in their sins, in hopes that hereafter they shall repent of them.

5. If you be still resolved to delay this business and put it off at present, consider well with your selves how long you intend to delay it. I hope not to the last, nor till sickness come and death make his approaches to you. This is next to madness to venture all upon such an after-game. 'Tis just as if a man should be content to be shipwrack'd, in hope that he shall afterwards escape by a plank and get safe to shore. But I hope none are so unreasonable, yet I fear that many have a mind to put it off to old age, tho they do not care to say so. *Seneca* expostulates excellently with this sort of men; *Who shall ensure thy Life till that time? Who shall pass his word for thee, that the providence of God will suffer all things to happen and fall out just as thou*

hast designed and forecast them? Art thou not ashamed to reserve the relicks of thy life for thy self, and to set apart only that time only to be wise and virtuous in, which is good for nothing? How late is it then to begin to live well when thy life is almost at an end? What a stupid forgetfulness is it of our mortality, to put off good resolutions to the fiftieth or sixtieth year of our age, and resolve to begin to do better at that *time of life to which very few persons have reach'd?*

But perhaps thou art not altogether so unreasonable, but desirest only to respite this work till the first heat of youth and lust be over, till the cooler and more considerate part of thy life come on; *that* perhaps thou thinkest may be the fittest and most convenient season. But still we reckon upon uncertainties, for perhaps that season may never be: However, to be sure it is much more in our power, by the assistance of God's grace which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men, to conquer our lusts now, and to resist the most heady and violent temptations to vice, than either to secure the future time, or to recover that which is once past and gone.

Some seem yet more reasonable, and are content to come lower, and desire only to put it off for a very little while. But why for a little while? Why till to morrow? To morrow will be as this day, only with this difference, that thou wilt in all probability be more unwilling and indisposed *then.*

So that there is no *future* time which any man can reasonably pitch upon All delay in this case is dangerous, and as senseless as the expectation of the *Idiot* described by the *Poet*, who being come to the river side and intending to pass over, stays till all the water in the river be gone by and hath left the channel a dry passage for him.

——at ille
Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

But the river runs, and runs, and will run, and if he should stay a thousand years will never be the nearer being dry. So that if the man must go over, and there be a necessity for it (as there is for Repentance) the only wise resolution to be taken in this case, is to wade or swim over as well as he can, because the matter will never be amended by tarrying.

6. *Lastly*, Consider what an unspeakable happiness it is to have our minds settled in that condition, that we may without fear and amazement, nay with comfort and confidence expect death and judgment. Death is never far from any of us, and the general Judgment of the world nay be nearer than we are aware of; for *of that day and hour knoweth no man.* And these are two terrible things, and nothing can free us from the terror of them but a good conscience, and a good conscience is only to be had either by innocence, or by repentance and amendment of life. Happy man! who by this means is at peace with God, and with himself; and can think of death and judgment without dread and astonishment. For *the sting of death is sin*; and the terror of the great day only concerns those who have lived wickedly and impenitently, and would not be persuaded, neither by the mercies of God, nor by the fear of his judgments, to repent and turn to him: But if we have truly forsaken our sins, and do sincerely endeavour to live in obedience to the Laws and Commands of God, the more we think of death and judgment the greater matter of joy and Comfort will these things be to us: For *blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing.* Let us therefore as soon as possibly we can put our selves into this posture and preparation, according to that advice of our blessed Saviour, *Luke* 12. 35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye your selves like unto men that wait for their Lord.*

And

And now I hope that enough hath been said to convince men of the great unreasonableness and folly of these delays; nay I believe that most men are convinced of it by their own thoughts, and that their Consciences call them fools a thousand times for it: But O that I knew what to say that might prevail with men and effectually persuade them to do that which they are so abundantly convinced is so necessary.

And here I might address my self to the several Ages of Persons. You that are *young*, and have hitherto been in a good measure innocent, may prevent the Devil, and by an early Piety give God the first possession of your souls; and by this means never be put to the trouble of so great and solemn a Repentance, having never been deeply engaged in a wicked life: You may do a glorious, I had almost said a meritorious thing, in cleaving stedfastly to God and resolving to serve him, when you are so importunately courted and so hotly assaulted by the Devil and the World. However, you may not live to be old; therefore upon that consideration begin the work presently, and make use of the opportunity that is now in your hands.

You that are grown up to *ripeness of years* and are in the full vigour of your age, *you* are to be put in mind that the heat and inconsiderateness of youth is now past and gone, that reason and consideration are now in their perfection and strength, that this is the very age of prudence and discretion, of wisdom and wariness: So that now is the proper time for you to be serious, and wisely to secure your future happiness.

As for those that are *old*, *they* methinks should need no body to admonish them, that it is now high time for them to begin a new life, and that the time past of their Lives is too much to have spent in sin and folly. There is no trifling where men have a great work to do, and but little time to do it in. Your Sun is certainly going down and near its setting, therefore you should quicken your pace, considering that your Journey is never the shorter because you have but little time to perform it in. Alas man! thou art just ready to die, and hast thou not yet begun to live? Are thy passions and lusts yet unsubdued, and have they had no other mortification than what age hath given them? 'Tis strange to see how in the very extremities of old-age, many men are as if they had still a thousand years to live, and make no preparation for death, tho' it dogs them at the heels and is just come up to them and ready to give them the fatal stroke.

Therefore let us not put off this necessary work of reforming our selves, in what part and age of our lives soever we be: *To day whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.* Nay, to day is with the latest to begin this Work; had we been wise we would have begun it sooner. 'Tis God's infinite mercy to us that it is not quite too late, that the day of God's patience is not quite expired, and the door shut against us. Therefore do not defer your repentance to the next solemn time, to the next occasion of receiving the blessed Sacrament: Do not say, I will then reform and become a new man, after *that* I will take leave of my lusts, and sin no more. For let us make what haste we can, we cannot possibly make too much.

—— *properat vivere nemo satis.*

No man makes haste enough to be good, to *cease to do evil, and to learn to do well.* Be as quick as we will, life will be too nimble for us, and go on faster than our work does, and death will go nigh to prevent us and surprize us unawares.

Do;

Do, do, *sinner*; abuse and neglect thy self yet a little while longer, till the time of regarding thy soul and working out thy own salvation be at an end, and all the opportunities of minding that great concernment be slipped out of thy hands, never to be recovered, never to be called back again; no, not by thy most earnest wishes and desires, by thy most fervent prayers and tears; and thou be brought into the condition of *profane Esau*, who for once despising the Blessing lost it for ever, *and found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

To conclude: Art thou convinced that thy eternal happiness depends upon following the Advice which hath now been given thee? Why then do but behave thy self in this case, as thou and all prudent men are wont to do in matters which thou canst not but acknowledge to be of far less concernment. If a man be travelling to such a place, so soon as he finds himself out of the way he presently stops and makes towards the right way, and hath no inclination to go wrong any farther: If a man be sick, he will be well presently if he can, and not put it off to the future: Most men will gladly take the first opportunity that presents it self, of being rich or great; every man almost catches at the very first offers of a great place or a good purchase, and secures them presently if he can, lest the opportunity be gone, and another snatch these things from him. Do thou thus so much more in matter so much greater. Return from the error of thy way, be well, save thy self, as soon as possibly thou canst. When happiness presents it self to thee do not turn it off, and bid it come again to morrow. Perhaps thou may'st never be so fairly offered again, perhaps the day of salvation may not come again to morrow, nay perhaps to *thee* to morrow may never come. But if we were sure that happiness would come again, yet why should we put it off? Does any man know how to be safe and happy to day, and can he find in his heart to tarry till to morrow?

Now the God of all mercy and patience give every one of us the wisdom and grace to *know* and to *do, in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes*; for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever.* Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

The diſtinguiſhing Character of a Good and a Bad Man.

1 JOHN III. 10.

In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.

IT is certainly a matter of the greateſt conſequence to us, both in order to our preſent peace and future happineſs, truly to underſtand our ſpiritual ſtate and condition, and whether we belong to God and be his Children or not. And it is not ſo difficult as is commonly imagined to arrive at this knowledge, if we have a mind to it, and will but deal impartially with our ſelves; for the Text gives us a plain mark and character whereby we may know it, *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.*

From which words I ſhall endeavour by God's aſſiſtance to lay men open to themſelves, and to repreſent to every one of us the truth of our condition; and then leave it to the grace of God, and every man's ſerious conſideration, to make the beſt uſe of it.

And it will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter, to conſider briefly the occaſion of theſe words. And this will beſt appear by attending ſtedfaſtly to the main ſcope and deſign of this *Epiſtle*. And I think that no man that reads it with attention can doubt but that it is particularly deſigned againſt the impious Sect of the *Gnoſticks*, who, as the *Fathers* tell us, ſprang from *Simon Magus*, and pretended to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, from whence they had the name of *Gnoſticks*; but notwithſtanding this glittering pretence they did allow themſelves in all manner of impious and vicious practices, *turning the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs*, as St. *Jude* ſpeaks of them. And that St. *John* aims particularly at this ſort of men, is very evident from the frequent and plain alluſions throughout this *Epiſtle* to thoſe Names and Titles which this Sect aſſumed to themſelves, as Chap. 2. ver. 4. *He that ſaith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* And ver. 9. *He that ſaith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkneſs even until now.* Which paſſages, and many more in this *Epiſtle*, do plainly refer to the pretences of this *Sect* to more than ordinary *knowledge* and *illumination* in the myſteries of Religion; notwithſtanding they did ſo notoriouſly contradict theſe glorious pretences by the impiety of their lives, and particularly by their hatred and enmity to their Fellow-Chriſtians. For, as the *ancient Fathers* tell us, they pretended that whatever they did they could not ſin. And this our *Apoſtle* intimates in the beginning of this *Epiſtle*, *If we ſay that we have no ſin we de-*

ceive our selves, and the truth is not in us. And they held it lawful to renounce Christianity to avoid persecution; and not only so, but also to join with the Heathen in persecuting the Christians; which seems to be the reason why the *Apostle* so often taxeth them *for hatred to their Brethren*, and calls them *Murtherers*.

Now to shew the inconsistence of these principles and practices with Christianity the Apostle useth many Arguments, amongst which he particularly insisteth upon this, That nothing is more essential to a *Disciple of Christ* and a *Child of God* (by which Titles Christians were commonly known) than to abstain from the practice of all sin and wickedness; *ver.* 6. of this Chap. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth* not; *whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*, (whatever Knowledge they might pretend to, it was evident they were destitute of the true knowledge of God and his Son *Jesus Christ*) and Vers. 7. *Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*; and Ver. 8. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil*; and Ver. 9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*; let men pretend what they will, wickedness is a plain mark and character of one that belongs to the *Devil*; as on the contrary righteousness is an evidence of a *Child of God*: *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil*, &c.

I shall briefly explain the words, and then consider the matter contained in them.

By the children of God, and the children of the Devil, are meant good and bad men; it being usual in the phrase of Scripture to call persons or things which partake of such a nature or quality, the children of those who are eminently endued with that nature and disposition. Thus they who are of the faith of *Abraham*, and do the works of *Abraham*, are called *Abraham's children*: In like manner, those who in their dispositions and actions imitate God are called *the children of God*; and on the contrary, those that addict themselves to sin and impiety are counted of another race and descent, they resemble the Devil and belong to him as the Chief and Head of that Faction.

By *righteousness* is here meant universal goodness and conformity to the Law of God, in opposition to sin which is the transgression of that Law.

By being *manifest* is meant, that hereby good and bad men are really distinguished, so that every one that will examine his condition by this mark may know of which number he is, and to what Party he belongs.

I come now to the main argument contained in the words, which is to give us a certain character and mark of distinction between a good and bad man; ἐν τούτῳ, *by this the children of God are manifest and the children of the Devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

In the management of the following Discourse, I shall proceed in this method.

First, We will consider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man which is here laid down, *Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

Secondly, I shall endeavour to shew that by this mark every man may, with due care and diligence, come to the knowledge of his spiritual state and condition. *By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil.*

Thirdly, I shall enquire whence it comes to pass, that notwithstanding this so many persons are at so great uncertainty concerning their condition,

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I. We will consider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man, which is here in the Text, *Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God*; which implies likewise on the contrary, that *whosoever doth righteousness is of God.* Now in the strictest sense of this Phrase, he only who lives in all the commandments of God blameless can be said to *do righteousness*; But in this sense *there is none that doth righteousness, no, not one*; and consequently none could be the Children of God; but the Text supposes some to be so, and therefore by *doing righteousness* the *Apostle* must necessarily be understood to mean something that is short of perfect and unsinning obedience. So that the question is, What *doing of righteousness* is sufficient to denominate a man a *Child of God*, and to put him into a state of grace and favour with him?

And I do not intend nicely to state this matter. 'Tis not perhaps possible to be done, nothing being more difficult than to determine the very utmost bounds and limits of things, and to tell exactly and just to a point where the line of difference between Virtue and Vice, between the state of a good a bad man, is to be placed: And if it could be done, it would be of no great use; for I take it to be no part of my business to tell men how many faults they may have, and how little goodness, and yet be *the Children of God*: but rather to acquaint them what degrees of holiness and goodness are necessary to give men a clear and comfortable evidence of their good estates towards God, and then to persuade them in order to their peace and assurance to endeavour after such degrees.

Wherefore to state the business so far as is necessary to give men a sufficient knowledge of their condition, I shall briefly consider who they are that in the Apostle's sense may be said to be *doers of righteousness*, or *not doers of it.* And because the *Apostle* lays down the Rule negatively, I shall therefore

In the *first* place, enquire who they are that in the *Apostle*'s sense may be said *not to do righteousness.*

1. They that live in the general course of a wicked life, in the practice of great and known sins, as injustice, intemperance, filthy and sensual lusts, prophane neglect and contempt of God and Religion, so that by the whole course and tenor of their actions it is plain beyond all denial that *there is no fear of God before their eyes.* Concerning these the case is so very evident that it seems too mild and gentle an expression to call them *not doers of righteousness.*

2. They who live in the habitual practice of any one known sin, or in the neglect of any considerable part of their known duty. For any vicious habit denominates a man, and puts him into an evil state.

3. They who are guilty of the single act of a very heinous and notorious crime; as a deliberate act of blasphemy, of murther, perjury, fraud or oppression, or of any other crime of the like enormity. For tho ordinarily one single act of sin doth not denominate one a bad man, when the general course of the man's life is contrary; yet the single acts of some sorts of sins are so crying and heinous, and do so stare every man's conscience in the face, that they are justly esteemed to be of equal malignity with vicious habits of an inferior kind; because they do almost necessarily suppose a great depravation of mind, and a monstrous alienation from God and goodness in the person that deliberately commits them. And they who are guilty in any of these three degrees now mentioned are most certainly *not doers of righteousness*, and consequently it is *manifest* that they are not *the children of God.*

In the *second* place, I shall enquire who they are that in the *Apostle's* sense may be said to *do righteousness*. *In short, they who in the general course of* their lives do keep the Commandments of God. And thus the *Scripture* generally expresseth this matter, by *keeping the Commandments of God*, and by *having respect to all his Commandments*; by *obedience to the Gospel of Christ*; by being *holy in all manner of conversation*; by *abstaining from all kind of evil*; by *cleansing our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*; and by *practising holiness in the fear of God*: To which I shall add the description which St. *Luke* gives us of the *righteousness* of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, Luke 1. 6. *They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* All which expressions do plainly signify the actual conformity of our lives and actions in the general course and tenor of them, to the Laws and Commands of God. And this implies these two things; That *the tenor of our lives and actions be agreeable to these Laws of God*: And that *these actions be done with a sincere and upright mind*; out of regard to God and another world, and not for low and temporal ends.

And I chuse rather to describe a righteous man by the actual conformity of the general course of his actions to the Law of God, than (as some have done) by a sincere Desire or resolution of obedience. For a desire may be sincere for the time it lasts, and yet vanish before it comes to any real effect. And how innocently soever it was intended it is certainly a great mistake in Divinity, and of very dangerous consequence to the souls of men, to affirm that a Desire of grace is grace; and consequently by the same reason, that a desire of obedience is obedience. A sincere desire and resolution to be good is indeed a good beginning, and ought by all means to be cherished and encouraged; but yet it is far enough from being the thing desired, or from being accepted for it in the esteem of God: For God never accepts the Desire for the deed, but where there is no possibility, no opportunity of doing the thing desired; but if there be, and the thing be not done, there is no reason to imagine that the desire in that case should be accepted as if the thing were done. For instance, if a man give alms according to his ability, and would give more if he were able, in this case the desire is accepted for the deed. And of this case it is and no other that the *Apostle* speaks, 2 *Cor.* 8. 12. *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* That is, God interprets and accepts the charity of men according to the largeness of their hearts, and not according to the straitness of their fortunes: But it is a great mistake to draw a general conclusion from this Text, that in all cases God accepts the will for the deed. For tho a man sincerely desire and resolve to reform his life (as I doubt not many men often do) but do it not when there is time and opportunity for it, these desires and resolutions are of no account with God; all this *righteousness is but as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away.* Men are not apt to mistake so grosly in other matters. No man believes hunger to be meat, or thirst to be drink; and yet there is no doubt of the truth and sincerity of these natural desires. No man thinks that covetousness or a greedy desire to be rich is an estate, or that ambition or an insatiable desire of honour is really advancement: Just so, and no otherwise, a desire to be good is righteousness. The *Apostle*'s caution a little before the Text may fitly be applied to this purpose, *Little children, let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* Not but that the best of men do sometimes fall through infirmity, and are betrayed by surprize, and born down by the violence of

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temptation; but if the general course of our actions be a *doing of righteousness*, the grace of the Gospel, in and through the merits of our blessed Saviour, doth accept of this imperfect but sincere obedience.

II. I shall endeavour to shew, that by this mark every man may with due care and diligence, arrive at the certain knowledge of his spiritual state and condition. *By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.* By which the *Apostle* means that this is a real mark of difference betwixt good and bad men, and that whereby they very often manifest themselves to others; especially when the course of their lives is eminently pious and virtuous, or notoriously impious and wicked. But because it doth not so much concern us curiously to enquire into, much less severely to censure the state of other men, I shall only consider at present how far by this mark and character every man may make a certain judgment of his own good or bad condition.

1. By this character, as I have explained it, he that is a bad man may certainly know himself to be so, if he will but consider his condition, and do not wilfully deceive and delude himself. As for those who are vicious in the general course of their lives, or have been guilty of the act of some heinous or notorious sin not yet repented of; their case is so plain for the most part, even to themselves, that they can have no manner of doubt concerning it. Such men stand continually convicted and condemned by the sentence of their own minds: and whenever they reflect upon themselves (which they do as seldom as they can) they are a *terror to themselves*, and full of amazement and fearful expectation of judgment. Not but that even in so plain a case many men do use great endeavours to cheat themselves, and would be very glad to find out ways to reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of Heaven, and to gain the favour, at least the forgiveness of God, without repentance and amendment of their lives. And to this end they are willing to confess their sins, and to undergo any Penance that should be imposed upon them, that only excepted which only can do them good; I mean, real reformation. And when the Priest hath absolv'd them, they would fain believe that God hath forgiven them too; however, they return to their former course, and being strongly addicted to their lusts, between stupidity and foolish hopes they at last come to this desperate resolution, to venture all upon the absolution of the Priest, *Et valeat quantum valere potest*, let it have what effect it can; tho I dare say that in their most serious thoughs they are horribly afraid it will do them no good.

And for those who are sinners of a lesser rate, and perhaps allow themselves only in one kind of vice, they likewise have reason to conclude themselves in a bad condition; especially if they consider that he who lives in the breach of any one Commandment of God is guilty of all, because he contemns that authority which enacted the whole Law. And 'tis easy for any man to discern the habit of any sin in himself; as when he frequently commits it, when he takes up no firm resolutions against it, when he useth no competent care to avoid the temptations to it, nor puts forth any vigorous endeavours to break off from it; or however, still continues in the practice of it. For the customary practice of any known sin is utterly inconsistent with sincere resolutions and endeavours against it, there being no greater evidence of the insincerity of resolutions and endeavours in any kind than still to go on to do contrary to them.

2. By this character likewise they that are sincerely good may generally be well assured of their good condition, and that they are *the children of*

God. And there are but two things necessary to evidence this to them; That the general course and tenor of their actions be agreeable to the Laws of God; and, That they be sincere and upright in those actions. And both these every man may sufficiently know concerning himself; for if the Laws of God be plain, and lie open to every man's understanding, then it is as easy for every man to know when he obeys God and keeps his Commandments, as when he obeys the commands of his Father or his Prince, and when he keeps the known Laws of the Land. And no sensible or considerate man ever had any doubt of this kind, for if a man can know any thing he can certainly tell when he keeps or breaks a known Law; so that all doubts of this nature are frivolous and idle pretences to cover mens faults, and such as they would be ashamed to alledge in any other case.

And a good man may likewise know when he obeys God sincerely. Not but that men often deceive themselves with an opinion, or at least a groundless hope of their own sincerity; but if they will deal fairly with themselves, and use due care and diligence, there are very few cases (if any) wherein they may not know their own sincerity in any act of obedience to God: For what can a man know concerning himself, if not the reality of his own intentions? If any man should in earnest tell me, that he doubted very much whether he had that friendship for me which he made profession of, and that he was afraid that his affection to me was not real and sincere, I confess I should doubt of it too; because I should certainly conclude that no man could know that matter so well as he himself.

And there is no doubt but whoever hath a hearty kindness for another, and a sincere desire to serve and please him, knows he has it. And accordingly good and holy men in Scripture do every where with great confidence and assurance appeal to God concerning the integrity and sincerity of their hearts towards him. *Job* and *David*, *Hezekiah* and *Nehemiah* in the *Old Testament*; and in the *New* St. *Paul* for himself and *Timothy*, makes this solemn profession of their sincerity, 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world.* And I cannot call to mind so much as any one passage in Scripture, from whence it can be collected that any good man ever doubted of his own sincerity. And to say the truth it would not be modesty but impudence in any man to declare that he suspects himself of hypocrisy; good men have always abhorred the thoughts of it. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job*, and yet he could not bear to have his integrity questioned. It was a brave and generous speech of his, *Till I dye, I will not remove my integrity from me.*

And yet it hath so happened that *this* is become a very common doubt among religious people, and they have been so unreasonably cherished in it as to have it made a considerable evidence of a man's sincerity to doubt of it himself. It is indeed said in Scripture, *Jer.* 17. 9. *That the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* which is true concerning our future intentions and actions: no man knowing how his mind may change hereafter. Little did *Hazael* think that ever he should do those things which the Prophet foretold him. But tho this be true in it self, yet 'tis not the meaning of that Text. For the Prophet in that *chapter* plainly makes use of this consideration of the falshood and deceitfulness of man's heart as an argument to take off the People of *Israel* from *trusting in the arm of flesh*, and in those promises which were made to them of foreign assistance from *Egypt*: Because men may pretend fair, and yet deceive those that rely upon them, for *the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked*, and

and none but God knows whether mens inward intentions be anſwerable to their outward profeſſions; *for he ſearcheth the heart and trieth the reins.* And this I verily believe is all that the *Prophet* here intends, That there is a great deal of fraud and deceit in the hearts of bad men, ſo that no man can rely upon their promiſes and profeſſions; but God knows the hearts of all men. But now becauſe God alone knows the hearts of all men and the ſincerity of their intentions towards one another, doth it from hence follow that it is a thing either impoſſible or very difficult for any man to know the ſincerity of his own preſent intentions and actions? To make any ſuch concluſion were to *condemn the generation of God's children*, thoſe holy and excellent men in Scripture, *Job*, and *David*, and *Hezekiah*, and St. *Paul*, who do ſo frequently appeal to God concerning their own integrity. And ſurely when the Apoſtle ſaith, *No man knows the things of a man, but the ſpirit of a man which is in him*, he plainly ſuppoſes that every man is conſcious to the motions and intentions of his own mind. I have inſiſted the longer upon this, that I might from the very foundation deſtroy an imagination, which is not only untrue in it ſelf, but has likewiſe been a very great hindrance to the peace and comfort of many good men.

III. Let us enquire whence it comes to paſs, that notwithſtanding this ſo many perſons are at ſo great uncertainty about their ſpiritual condition. For the clearing of this matter, we will diſtinctly conſider theſe three things. *Firſt*, The grounds of the falſe hopes and confidence of men really bad concerning their good condition. *Secondly*, The cauſleſs doubts and jealouſies of men really good concerning their bad condition. And *Thirdly*, The juſt cauſes of doubting in others. As for the troubles and fears of men who are notoriouſly bad and live in the Practice of known vices, theſe do not fall under our conſideration: If they be troubled about their condition, it is no more than what they ought to be; and if they be only doubtful of it, it is leſs than they ought to be. To perſons in this condition there is only counſel to be given to leave their ſins and become better, but no comfort to be adminiſtred to them till firſt they have followed that counſel: For till they reform, if they think themſelves to be in a bad condition, they think juſt as they ought, and as there is great reaſon, and no body ſhould go about to perſuade them otherwiſe.

Firſt then, We will conſider the grounds of the falſe hopes and confidence of men really bad concerning their good condition. I do not now mean the worſt of men, but ſuch as make ſome ſhew and appearance of goodneſs. It is very unpleaſing to men to fall under the hard opinion and cenſure of others, but the moſt grievous thing in the world for a man to be condemned by himſelf; and therefore it is no wonder that men uſe all manner of ſhifts to avoid ſo great an inconvenience as is the ill opinion of a man's ſelf concerning himſelf and his own condition.

Some therefore rely upon the profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith, and their being baptized into it. But this is ſo far from being any exemption from a good life, that it is the greateſt and moſt ſolemn obligation to it. Doſt thou believe the Doctrine of the Goſpel? thou of all men art inexcuſable if thou alloweſt thy ſelf in ungodlineſs and worldly luſts.

Others truſt to their external Devotion, they frequent the Church, and ſerve God conſtantly, they pray to him, and hear his word, and receive the bleſſed Sacrament: But let us not deceive our ſelves, God is not mocked. All this is ſo far from making amends for the impiety of our lives, that on the contrary, the impiety of our lives ſpoils all the acceptance of our

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tions. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law* (that is, from obeying it) *even his prayer shall be an abomination.*

Others who are sensible they are very bad depend very much upon their repentance, especially if they set solemn times apart for it. And there is no doubt but that a sincere repentance will put a man into a good condition: But then it is to be considered, that no repentance is sincere but that which produceth a real change and reformation in our lives. For we have not repented to purpose if we return again to our sins. It is well thou art in some measure sensible of thy miscarriage, but thou art never safe till thou hast forsaken thy sins; thy estate and condition towards God is not changed, till thou hast really alter'd thy self and the course of thy Life.

Others satisfy themselves with the exercise of some particular graces and virtues, Justice, and Liberality, and Charity. And is it not a thousand pities that thy life is not all of a piece, and that all the other parts of it are not answerable to these, that thou should'st lose the reward of so much real goodness out of thy fondness to any one vice or lust, that when *thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, for *lack* of one or two things more thou should'st fall short of it? Hast thou never heard what the Scripture saith, that *he who offends in one point is a transgressor of the whole Law?* To make a man a good man, all parts of goodness must concur, but any one way of wickedness is sufficient to denominate a man bad.

Lastly, Some who are very careful of their outward carriage and conversation, but yet are conscious to themselves of great secret faults and vices, when they can find no comfort from themselves and the testimony of their own consciences, are apt to comfort themselves in the good opinion which perhaps others have of them. But if we know our selves to be bad, and *our own hearts to condemn us*, it is not the good opinion of others concerning us which can either alter or better our condition. They may have reason for their charity, and yet thou none for thy confidence. Trust no body concerning thy self rather than thy self, because no body can know thee so well as thou may'st know thy self.

These, and such as these, are the hopes of the Hypocrite, which *Job* elegantly compares to the *Spiders web*, finely and artificially wrought, but miserably thin and weak; so that we our selves may see through them, and if we lay the least stress upon them they will break. They are but pleasant dreams and delusions, which, whenever we are awaken'd to a serious consideration of our condition by the apprehensions of approaching death and judgment, will presently vanish and disappear; so the same *holy man* tells us, *Job* 27. 8. *What is the hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul?*

Secondly, We will consider in the next place the causless doubts and jealousies of men really good, concerning their bad condition. For as some are prone beyond all reason to delude themselves with vain hopes of their good condition, so others are apt as unreasonably to torment themselves with groundless fears and jealousies that their estate is bad. And of these doubts there are several occasions, the chief whereof I shall mention, by which we may judge of the rest that are of the like nature.

1. Some are afraid that they are reprobated from all eternity, and therefore they cannot be the *Children of God*. This is so unreasonable, that if it were not a real cause of trouble to some persons it did not deserve to be considered. For no man that sincerely endeavours to please God and to keep his Commandments, hath from Scripture the least ground to suspect any latent or secret decree of God against him that shall work his ruin. But whatever

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the decrees of God be concerning the eternal ſtate of men, ſince they are ſecret to us they can certainly be no rule either of our duty or comfort. And no man hath reaſon to think himſelf rejected of God, either from eternity, or in time, that does not find the marks of Reprobation in himſelf, I mean an evil heart and life. By this indeed a man may know that he is out of God's favour for the preſent, but he hath no reaſon at all from hence to conclude that God hath from all eternity and for ever caſt him off. That God calls him to repentance, and affords to him the ſpace and means of it, is a much plainer ſign that God is willing and ready to have mercy on him than any thing elſe is, or can be, that God hath utterly caſt him off. And therefore for men to judge of their condition by the decrees of God which are hid from us, and not by his word which is *near us and in our hearts*, is as if a man wandring in the wide Sea, in a dark night when the heaven is all clouded about, ſhould yet reſolve to ſteer his courſe by the ſtars which he cannot ſee, but only gueſs at, and neglect the Compaſs, which is at hand and would afford him a much better and more certain direction. This therefore is to be rejected as a fond and groundleſs imagination, and which ought to trouble no body, becauſe no body doth nor can know any thing concerning it. *Moſes* hath long ſince very well determined this matter, *Deut.* 29. 29. *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but thoſe things which are revealed, unto us and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law.*

2. Good men are conſcious to themſelves of many frailties and imperfections, and therefore they are afraid of their condition. But God conſiders the infirmities of our preſent ſtate, and expects no other obedience from us in order to our acceptance with him, but what this ſtate of imperfection is capable of: And provided the ſincere endeavour and general courſe of our lives be to pleaſe him and keep his Commandments, the terms of the Goſpel are ſo merciful, that our frailties ſhall not be imputed to us, ſo as to affect our main ſtate and to make us ceaſe to be the children of God. And tho' we may be guilty of many errors and ſecret ſins which eſcape our notice and obſervation, yet it is not impoſſible for us to exerciſe ſuch a repentance for theſe as will be available for their pardon. For we have to deal with a merciful God, who is pleaſed to accept of ſuch an obedience and of ſuch a repentance as we are capable of performing. Now there is a great difference between thoſe ſins which require a particular repentance before we can hope for the pardon of them, (as all great and deliberate and preſumptuous ſins do, which are never committed without our knowledge, and are ſo far from ſlipping out of our memory that they are continually flying in our faces, and we cannot forget them if we would) and ſins of infirmity occaſion'd by ſurprize and violence of temptation, through ignorance or inadvertency: For a general repentance, ſuch as we every day exerciſe in our devotions and prayers to God, may ſuffice for theſe. I ſpeak not this to hinder any from a more particular repentance of all their known failings, the more particular the better; but to remove the groundleſs fears and jealouſies of men about their main eſtate and condition. And if any ask how I know that a general repentance will ſuffice for theſe kind of ſins? I anſwer, becauſe more than this in many caſes is impoſſible; ſo that either we muſt reſt ſatisfied that God will forgive them upon theſe terms, or conclude that they ſhall not be forgiven at all, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the Scriptures: I ſay, in many caſes, more than this is impoſſible, becauſe ſins of Ignorance, and thoſe common errors and frailties of humane life which *David* calls *ſecret ſins*, are not particularly known to us when they are committed, and conſequently it is impoſſible that we ſhould particularly

cularly repent of them. And therefore in this case there can be no doubt but that God doth accept of a general repentance, as he did from *David* when he made that humble confession and prayer to him, *Psal.* 19. 12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret sins.*

3. They are afraid their obedience is not sincere, because it proceeds many times from fear and not always out of pure love to God. For answer to this: It is plain from Scripture that God propounds to men several motives and arguments to obedience, some proper to work upon their *fear*, as the threatnings of punishment; some upon their *hope*, as the promises of blessing and reward; others upon their *love*, as the mercies and forgiveness of God. From whence it is evident he intended they should all work upon us. And accordingly the Scripture gives us instances in each kind. Noah *moved with fear* obeyed God in *preparing an Ark.* Moses *had respect unto the recompence of reward.* Mary Magdalen *loved much.* And as it is hard to say, so it is not necessary to determine just how much influence and no more each of these hath upon us: It is very well if men be reclaimed from their sins and made good by the joint force of all the considerations which God offers to us. To be sure love is the noblest and most generous principle of obedience, but fear commonly takes the first and fastest hold of us, and in times of violent temptation is perhaps the best argument to keep, even the best of men, within the bounds of their duty.

4. Another cause of doubting in good men is, from a sense of their imperfect performance of the duties of Religion, and of the abatement of their affections towards God at some times. They have many wandring thoughts in prayer and other exercises of devotion, and they cannot for their life keep their minds continually intent on what they are about. This we should strive against as much as we can, and that is the utmost we can do; but to cure this wholly is impossible, the infirmity of our nature and the frame of our minds will not admit of it: And therefore no man ought to question his sincerity, because he cannot do that which is impossible for men to do.

And then for the abatement of our affections to God and Religion at some times, this naturally proceeds from the inconstancy of mens tempers, by reason of which it is not possible that the best of men should be able always to maintain and keep up the same degree of zeal and fervour towards God. But our comfort is, that God doth not measure mens sincerity by the Tides of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions and the general tenor of their life and actions.

5. Another cause of these doubts is, that men expect more than ordinary and reasonable assurance of their good condition; some particular revelation from God, an extraordinary impression upon their minds to that purpose, which they think the Scripture means by the *testimony* and *seal* and *earnest of the Spirit.* God may give this when and to whom he pleases, but I do not find he hath any where promised it. And all that the Scripture means by those phrases of the *testimony* and *seal* and *earnest of the Spirit*, is to my apprehension no more but this, That the Holy Spirit which God bestowed upon Christians in so powerful and sensible a manner was a *seal* and *earnest* of their resurrection to eternal life, according to that plain Text, Rom. 8. 11. *If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* But then, who they are that have the Spirit of God, is only to be known by the real fruits and effects of it. If we be *led by the Spirit*, and *walk in the Spirit*, and *do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*, then *the Spirit of God dwelleth in us*; But this is very far from an immediate

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any extraordinary revelation from the Spirit of God to the minds of good men, telling them in particular that they are the Children of God. I know not what peculiar favour God may shew to some, but I know no such thing, nor ever yet met with any wise and good man that did affirm it of himself: And I fear that in most of those who pretend to it, it is either mere fancy, or gross delusion.

6. As for the case of *melancholy*, it is not a reasonable case, and therefore doth not fall under any certain rules and directions. They who are under the power of it are seldom fit to take that counsel which alone is fit to be given them, and *that* is, not to believe themselves concerning themselves, but to trust the judgment of others rather than their own apprehensions. In other cases every man knows himself best, but a melancholy man is most in the dark as to himself. This cause of trouble and doubting is very much to be pitied, but hard to be removed, unless by Physick, or by time, or by chance. One may happen to say something that may hit the humour of a melancholy man, and satisfy him for the present; but Reason must needs signify very little to those persons, the nature of whose distemper it is to turn every thing that can be said for their comfort into objections against themselves.

Thirdly, But besides those who mistake their condition either by presuming it to be better, or fearing it to be worse than it is, there are likewise others who upon good grounds are doubtful of their condition, and have reason to be afraid of it: Those I mean, who have some beginnings of goodness which yet are very imperfect. They have good resolutions, and do many things well, but they often fall and are frequently pull'd back by those evil inclinations and habits which are yet in a great measure unsubdued in them. These I cannot liken better than to the *Borderers* between two Countries who live in the marches and confines of two powerful Kingdoms, both which have a great influence upon them, so that it is hard to say whose subjects they are and to which Prince they belong: Thus it is with many in Religion, they have pious inclinations and have made some fair attempts towards goodness, they have begun to refrain from sin and to resist the occasions and temptations to it; but ever and anon they are mastered by their old lusts, and carried off from their best resolutions; and perhaps upon a little consideration they repent and recover themselves again, and after a while are again entangled and overcome.

Now the case of these persons is really doubtful both to themselves and others. And the proper direction to be given them in order to their peace and settlement, is by all means to encourage them to go on and fortify their good resolutions; to be more vigilant and watchful over themselves, to strive against sin and to resist it with all their might. And according to the success of their endeavours in this conflict, the evidence of their good condition will every day clear up and become more manifest; the more we grow in grace, and the seldomer we fall into sin, and the more even and constant our obedience to God is, so much the greater and fuller satisfaction we shall have of our good estate towards God: For *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day:* And *the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*

I shall only make two or three Inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this Argument, and so conclude.

1. From hence we learn the great danger of sins of Omission as well as Commission; *Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.* The mere neglect of any of the great duties of Religion, of piety towards God, and

of kindness and charity to men, tho we be free from the commission of great sins, is enough to cast us out of the favour of God and to shut us for ever out of his Kingdom, *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not; therefore depart ye cursed.*

2. It is evident from what hath been said, That nothing can be vainer than for men to live in any course of sin and impiety, and yet to pretend to be the children of God, and to hope for eternal life. The Children of God will do the works of God, and whoever hopes to enjoy him hereafter, will endeavour to be like him here; *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as He is pure.*

3. You see what is the great mark and character of a man's good or bad condition; *whosoever doeth righteousness is of God, and whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.* Here is a plain and sensible evidence by which every man that will deal honestly with himself may certainly know his own condition: and then according as he finds it to be, may take comfort in it, or make haste out of it. And we need not ascend into heaven, nor go down into the deep to search out the secret counsels and decrees of God; there needs no anxious enquiry whether we be of the number of God's Elect: If we daily mortify our lusts and grow in goodness, and take care to add to our faith and knowledge, temperance and patience and charity and all other Christian graces and virtues, we certainly take the best course in the world to *make our calling and election sure.* And without this it is impossible that we should have any comfortable and well-grounded assurance of our good condition. This one mark of *doing righteousness* is that into which all other signs and characters which are in Scripture given of a good man, are finally resolved; And this answers all those various Phrases which some men would make to be so many several and distinct marks of a *Child of God*; as, whether we have the true knowledge of God and divine illumination, for *hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments:* whether we sincerely love God, for *this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments:* and whether God loves us, for *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance will behold the upright:* whether we be regenerate and born of God, for *whosoever is born of God sinneth not:* whether we have *the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God*, for *as many as have the Spirit of God are led by the Spirit*, and *by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh:* whether we belong to Christ, and have an interest in him or not, for *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof:* In a word, whether the promise of heaven and eternal life belong to us, for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, but if we *have our fruits unto holiness, the end* will be *everlasting life.* So that you see at last, the Scripture brings all to this one mark, holiness and obedience to the Laws of God, or a vicious and wicked life; *In this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

Let us then deal impartially with our selves, and bring our lives and actions to this trial, and never be at rest till the matter be brought to some issue, and we have made a deliberate judgment of our condition, whether we be the *Children of God* or not: And if upon a full and fair examination our consciences give us this testimony, that by the Grace of God we have *denied ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and have lived *soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*, we may take joy and comfort in it; for *if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God:* But if upon the

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search and trial of our ways our case appear clearly to be otherwise, or if we have just cause to doubt of it, let us not venture to continue one moment longer in so uncertain and dangerous a condition. And if we desire to know the way of Peace, the Scripture hath set it plainly before us, *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well: Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, tho your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Tho our case be very bad, yet it is not desperate; *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:* And he is still willing to save us, if we be but willing to leave our sins and to serve him in holiness and righteousness the remaining part of our lives. We may yet be *turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God:* We who have ventured so long upon the brink of ruin may yet by the infinite mercies of God, and by the power of his Grace, be rescued from the base and miserable slavery of the Devil and our lusts *into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.*

And thus I have endeavoured, with all the plainness I could, to represent every man to himself, and to let him clearly see what his condition is towards God, and how the case of his soul and of his eternal happiness stands. And I do verily believe that what I have said in this matter is the truth of God, to which we ought all gladly to yield and render up our selves. For *great is Truth, and mighty above all things:* She is faithful and impartial in her counsels, and tho' she be not always welcome yet 'tis always wise to hearken to her, for in great kindness and charity she lets men know their condition and the danger of it that they may take care to prevent it: *With her is no accepting of persons, and in her judgment there is no unrighteousness.* I will conclude all with that excellent advice of a Heathen Philosopher, *Make it no longer a matter of dispute what are the marks and signs of a good man, but immediately set about it, and endeavour to become such a one.* Antonin. lib. 10.

SERMON XVI.

Of the Joy which is in Heaven at the Repentance of a Sinner.

LUKE XV. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

AFter many attempts made in vain to reclaim Sinners from their evil ways and to bring them to the wisdom of the just, it is hard for us who are the Messengers of God to men, not to sit down in despondence, and at last quite to despair of doing good upon them. But when I consider the infinite patience of God with Sinners, and how long *his Spirit strives with them*, why should we, *we* who are Sinners our selves, think much to bear with Sinners and patiently to contend with their obstinacy and perverseness? When I consider that our blessed *Saviour*, the great Preacher and Pattern of Righteousness, did not give over the worst of men nor despair of their recovery: this methinks should make us who are *Ambassadors for Christ*, unwearied in *beseeching men in his stead to be reconciled to God.*

And of this we have a famous instance in this *Chapter:* The *Publicans* and Sinners, as they had done several times before, came to hear our Saviour: He treated them very kindly, and conversed familiarly with them; at this the *Pharisees* were displeased and murmured, and this unreasonable murmuring of theirs gave occasion to the three *Parables* in this *Chapter.*

In which our Saviour does at once answer the Objection of the *Pharisees*, and give all possible encouragement to the repentance of these great Sinners. He answers the *Pharisees* by letting them plainly see that he was about the best work in the world, the most acceptable to God, and matter of greatest joy to all the heavenly Inhabitants. Instead of a severe Reproof of their uncharitableness, he offers that calmly to their consideration, which ought in all reason to convince them that he was no ways to blame for this familiar conversation of his with Sinners, having no other design upon them but to reclaim them from their Vices, and to make them fit company for the best of Men; that he was a Spiritual Physician, and therefore his proper work and employment lay among his Patients. And then instead of terrifying these Sinners, who seemed to come with a good mind to be instructed by him, he gently insinuates the most winning arguments and the greatest encouragement to Repentance; by shewing how ready God was, after all their sins and provocations, to receive them to his grace and favour, provided they did sincerely repent and betake themselves to a better course: And not only so, but that the repentance of a sinner is a great joy to the great King

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of the World, and to all that holy and heavenly Host that attend upon Him.

From which method of our Saviour in treating so great Sinners so gently, I cannot but make this observation, for my own use as well as for others; That it is good to give, even the greatest of Sinners, all the encouragement we can to repentance; and tho men have been never so bad, yet if they have but this one good quality left in them, that they are patient to be instructed, and content to hear good counsel, we should use them kindly and endeavour to recover them by the fairest means; not so much upbraiding them for their having been bad, as encouraging them to become better.

To this purpose our Saviour uttered *three* Parables; of *the recovery of a lost sheep*; of *finding a lost piece of mony*; of *the return of a prodigal son to his father*; and tho they all aim at the same scope and design, yet our Saviour useth this variey, not only to convey the same thing to several capacities in a more acceptable manner, one similitude happening to hit one person, and another another, but likewise to inculcate so weighty a matter the more upon his hearers and to fix it more deeply in their minds.

The words which I have read are the Moral or application of the first *Parable*, concerning a man who had an hundred sheep, and having lost one leaves the ninety and nine to go to seek that which was lost; and having found it, with great joy brings it home. By which our Saviour gives us to understand, what joy God and the blessed Spirits above take in the conversion of a sinner. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.* Than which nothing cou'd have been more proper, both to silence the uncharitable murmuring of the Pharisees against our Saviour for conversing with Publicans and Sinners to so good an end, and likewise to encourage sinners to repent: For why should the Pharisees be displeased at that which was so great a pleasure to God and the holy Angels? and what greater encouragement to repentance than this; that God is not only willing to receive the returning sinner, but that the news of his repentance is entertain'd in Heaven with so much joy, that if it be possible for the blessed Inhabitants of that place to have any thing added to their happiness, this will be a new accession to it?

There are *three* things in the words which require a very careful explication.

1. How we are to understand the *joy* that is in *Heaven* at the conversion of a sinner.

2. Who are here meant by the *just persons that need no repentance?*

3. With what reason is it here said, that there is *more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance?*

There is something of difficulty in each of these, which deserves our heedful and attentive consideration.

I. How we are to understand the *joy that is in Heaven at the repentance of a sinner?* And this (as indeed this whole passage of our Saviour's) we are not to understand too strictly and rigorously, but as spoken in a great measure after the manner of men and by way of accommodation to our capacity, so far as the persons here spoken of are capable of any addition to their joy and happiness.

As it refers *to God*, it seems very inconsistent with the happiness and perfection of the Divine Nature to suppose Him really capable of joy, any more than of grief or any other passion. Because this would be to imagine some new accession to his pleasure and happiness, which being always infinite

nite can never have any thing added to it. And therefore we are to understand this, as it relates to God, in the same manner as we do infinite other passages of Scriptue where humane passions are ascribed to him, to be spoken by way of condescension and after the language and manner of the sons of men; and to signify only thus much to us, that the conversion of a sinner is a thing highly pleasing and acceptable to God.

As it refers to *Angels* and other *Blessed Spirits*, I see no inconvenience why it may not be understood more strictly and literally; that they conceive a new joy at the news of a sinner's repentance, and find a fresh pleasure and delight springing up in their minds, when ever they hear the joyful tidings of a sinner rescued from the slavery of the Devil and the danger of eternal damnation; of a new member added to the Kingdom of God, that shall be a companion and sharer with them in that blessedness which they enjoy. There seems to me to be nothing in this repugnant to the nature and happiness of blessed Spirits in another world. For it is certain, that there are degrees of happiness among the blessed: From whence it necessarily follows that some of them may be happier than they are. And it is very probable, since the happiness of Angels and good men is but finite, that those who are most happy do continually receive new additions to their blessedness; and that their felicity is never at a stand but perpetually growing and improving to all eternity; and that as their knowledge and love do increase, so likewise the capacity and causes of their happiness are still more and more enlarged and augmented: So that it is reasonable enough to suppose that there is really joy, among the Angels and Spirits of just men made perfect, over every sinner that repenteth.

II. Who are here meant by the *just persons who need no repentance?* That our Saviour in this expression gives some glance and reflection upon the *Pharisees* (who prided themselves in their own righteousness, and instead of confessing their sins to God stood upon their own justification, as if they needed no repentance) is very probable; because this parable was designed to answer their murmurings against him, for conversing with Publicans and Sinners, and by the bye to give a check to those who were so conceited of their own righteousness as if they had no need of repentance. And this is very suitable to what our Saviour elsewhere says to them upon the like occasion, that *the whole have no need of the Physician, but the sick*; that *he came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance.* But yet tho our Saviour expresseth himself so as that the *Pharisees* might with reason enough apply it to themselves, that there was more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine of *them*, who were so conceited of their own righteousness that they thought they had no need of repentance (for indeed our Saviour delivers himself so, as to leave room for such a severe application) yet I think there is little doubt to be made but that he intended something further; and that supposing the *Pharisees* were as just as they pretended, and were really righteous men so as to stand in no need of such a repentance as great sinners do, yet our Saviour affirms, *there was more joy in Heaven over one penitent sinner, than over ninety and nine such just persons.*

But are there any persons in the world so just, as absolutely to stand in need of no repentance? No, there was never any such person in the world him only excepted who said this, our blessed Saviour, *who had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* And therefore this Phrase of *needing no repentance* is to be understood in a qualified sense, and with some allowance; otherwise our blessed Saviour had supposed a case which never was, of a great number of perfectly righteous men. And our Saviour's meaning in this

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is sufficiently explained in the last Parableof this Chapter, concerning the *Prodigal Son*; where the prodigal son is the *sinner that repented*; and his elder Brother, who had always observed and obeyed his father, he is the *just person who needed no repentance.* So that by him our Saviour plainly designs those who being religiously educated and brought up in the fear of God had never broke out into any extravagant and vicious course of life, and so in some sense had no need of repentance, that is, of changing the whole course of their lives, as the prodigal son had. Not but that the best of men are guilty of many faults and infirmities which they have too much cause to repent of, as our Saviour sufficiently intimates in that *Parable*: For certainly it was no small infirmity in the elder brother to be so envious, and to take so heinously the joyful welcome and entertainment which his prodigal brother at his return found from his father: But yet this single fault and sudden surprize of passion, considering the constant duty which he had paid to his father throughout the course of his life, did not make him such a sinner as to need such a repentance as his brother did, which consisted in a perfect change of the whole course of his life. And of such *just persons* as these, and of such a *repentance* as this, it seems very plain that our Saviour intended this discourse.

III. But the main difficulty of all is, with what reason it is here said that *there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance?* Is it not better not to offend, than to sin and repent? Is not innocence better than amendment, and the wisdom of prevention to be preferred before that of remedy? Is it worth the while to do amiss to make way for repentance? and is not this almost like *sinning that grace may abound?* And if repentance be not better than righteousness, why is there more joy in Heaven over the penitent than over the righteous; nay over one penitent sinner, than over ninety and nine just persons? Do not the blessed always rejoice most in that which is really best? Here is the difficulty, and it requires some care and consideration clearly to remove it. In order to which be pleased to consider these *three* things, which I think to be very material to the clearing of it.

1. That the same thing considered in several respects, may in some respects have the advantage of another thing and for those reasons be preferred before it, and yet not have the advantage of it absolutely and in all respects. Moral comparisons are not to be exacted to a Mathematical strictness and rigor. To this purpose I have observed in a former discourse, that it was long since judiciously noted by *Aristotle*, "That moral and proverbial "speeches are not to be taken too strictly, as if they were universally true "and in all cases: It is sufficient if they be true for the most part, and in several respects which are very considerable. And of this nature are most of the *Proverbs of Solomon*, and whosoever shall go about to make out the truth of them in all cases, does in my opinion take a very hard task upon himself. But which is nearer to my purpose, our Saviour himself in the Chapter before my Text, and in the moral application of a Parable too, (namely that of the *unjust steward*) useth a proverbial speech just in the same manner; *The Children of this world are in their generation wiser than the Children of light*: Which is only a wise observation that is generally true and in many respects, but not absolutely and universally. For some men have been as wise and diligent for the glory of God and interest of their souls, as ever any man was for this world, and for the advancement of his temporal interest. Of the like nature is this saying used by our Saviour, probably taken (as our Saviour did many other proverbial Speeches) from the *Jews*, and applied to his own purpose. For there are several sayings of the *Jewish* Masters much

to

to this purpose: As, *Great is the dignity of penitents: Great is the virtue of them that repent, so that no creature may stand in their rank and order.* And again, *The righteous may not stand in the same place with those that have repented.* These I confess were very high sayings, but yet very well designed for the encouragement of repentance. And they are not without good reason, as will appear if we consider these *two* things.

First, That the greater the difficulty of virtue is, so much the greater is the praise and commendation of it: And not only we our selves take the more joy and comfort in it, but it is more admirable and delightful to others. Now it cannot be denied to be much more difficult to break off a vicious habit, than to go on in a good way which we have been trained up in, and always accustomed to. Those that have been well educated have great cause to thank God, and to acknowledge the care of their Parents and Teachers: For piety and goodness are almost infinitely easier to such persons, than to those who have wanted this advantage. It is happy for them they never tasted of unlawful pleasures; if they had, they would possibly have drank as deep as others: It is well they were never entangled in a sinful course, nor enslaved to vicious habits, nor *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*; if they had, they might possibly never have been recovered out of the snare of the Devil. By the happiness of a good education, and the merciful providence of God, a great part of many mens virtue consists in their ignorance of vice, and their being kept out of the way of great and dangerous temptations; rather in the good customs they have been bred up to, than in the deliberate choice of their wills; and rather in the happy preventions of evil, than in their resolute constancy in that which is good. And God who knows what is in man, and sees to the bottom of every man's temper and inclination, knows how far this man would have fallen had he had the temptations of other men; and how irrecoverably perhaps he would have been plunged in an evil course, had he once entred upon it. So that repentance is a very great thing; and tho it be the most just, and fit, and reasonable thing in the world, yet for all that it deserves great commendation, because it is for the most part so very hard and difficult. And therefore tho absolutely speaking, innocence is better than repentance, yet, as the circumstances may be, the virtue of some penitents may be greater than of many just and righteous persons.

Secondly, There is this consideration further to recommend repentance, that they who are reclaim'd from a wicked course are many times more throughly and zealously good afterwards: Their trouble and remorse for their sins does quicken and spur them on in the ways of virtue and goodness, and a lively sense of their past errors is apt to make them more careful and conscientious of their duty, more tender and fearful of offending God, and desirous if it were possible to redeem their former miscarriages by their good behaviour for the future. Their love to God is usually more vehement and burns with a brighter flame, *for to whomsoever much is forgiven they will love much.* And they are commonly more zealous for the conversion of others, as being more sensible of the danger sinners are in and more apt to commiserate their case, remembring that it was once their own condition and with what difficulty they were rescued from so great a danger. And for the most part great penitents are more free from pride and contempt of others, the consideration of what themselves once were being enough to keep them humble all their days. So that penitents are many times more throughly and perfectly good, and after their recovery do in several respects outstrip and excel those who were never engaged in a vicious course of life: As a broken bone that is well set is sometimes stronger than it was before.

2. It

2. It will conduce alſo very much to the extenuating of this difficulty, to conſider that our Saviour does not here compare repentance with abſolute innocence and perfect righteouſneſs, but with the imperfect obedience of good men who are guilty of many ſins and infirmities; but yet upon account of the general courſe and tenor of their lives are by the mercy and favour of the Goſpel eſteemed juſt and righteous perſons, and for the merits and perfect obedience of our bleſſed Saviour ſo accepted by God. Now this alters the caſe very much, and brings the penitent and this ſort of righteous perſons much nearer to one another: ſo that in comparing them together, the true penitent may in ſome caſes, and in ſome reſpects, have the advantage of the righteous, and deſerve upon ſome accounts to be preferr'd before him.

3. Which is principally to be conſidered for the full clearing of this difficulty; this paſſage of our Saviour is to be underſtood as ſpoken very much after the manner of men, and ſuitably to the nature of human paſſions, and the uſual occaſions of moving them. We are apt to be exceedingly affected with the obtaining of what we did not hope for, and much more with regaining of what we look'd upon as loſt and deſperate. Whatever be the reaſon of it, ſuch is the nature of man, that we are not ſo ſenſibly moved at the continuance of a good which we have long poſſeſt, as at the recovery of it after it was loſt and gone from us. And the reaſons of a judicious value and eſteem of a ſettled pleaſure and contentment are one thing, and the cauſes of ſudden joy and tranſport another. A continued courſe of goodneſs may in it ſelf be more valuable, and yet repentance after a great fall and long wandrings may be much more moving and ſurprizing. For where things are conſtant and keep in the ſame tenor, they are not apt in their nature to give any new and ſudden occaſion of joy. And this is the reaſon given in the *Parable* of the *Prodigal Son*; where the Father tells his eldeſt Son, who was ſo offended at the joyful reception and welcome of his prodigal Brother, That *He had been always with him, and all that he had was his*; That is, he was ſenſible of his conſtant duty and obedience, than which nothing could have been more acceptable; and that it had not, nor ſhould not loſe its reward: But the return of his other Son, after he had given over all hopes of him, and looked upon his caſe as deſperate, this was a marvellous ſurprize and a happineſs beyond expectation, which is the proper and natural cauſe of joy and gladneſs: And therefore he tells him that upon ſuch an occaſion *it was meet that we ſhould make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was loſt, and is found.* His elder Son's continuance in his duty was the enjoyment of what he had alway had, but the return of his prodigal Son was the retrieving of what he had given up for loſt, and a kind of reſurrection from the dead. And thus our bleſſed Saviour to encourage the repentance of ſinners repreſents God after the manner of men, as if our heavenly Father did conceive ſuch a joy upon the repentance of a ſinner as earthly parents are wont to do upon the return of a wild and extravagant Son to himſelf and his duty.

Having thus, as briefly and clearly as I could, explained the ſeveral difficulties in the Text, I ſhall now deduce ſome Inferences from it, and ſo conclude.

1. *Firſt*, That the bleſſed Spirits above have ſome knowledge of the affairs of men here below, becauſe they are ſaid to rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner. This is ſpoken more particularly of the *Angels*, as appears by comparing what is more generally ſaid in the Text, that *there is joy in heaven*, with what is more particulary expreſs'd in the 10*th verſe*, that *there is*

joy in the presence of the Angels over one ſinner that repenteth. Now whether the Angels come to this knowledge by virtue of their miniſtry here below for the good of the Elect, and ſo in their continual intercourſe between heaven and earth bring to their fellow ſervants in heaven the joyful news of the repentance of ſinners upon earth; or whether God be pleaſed from time to time to reveal it to them, as a thing extremely welcome and delightful to good Spirits, and tending to the increaſe of their happineſs, as it is not very material to enquire, ſo perhaps impoſſible for us to determine.

However, it cannot from hence be concluded that the Angels or Saints in Heaven have ſuch an univerſal knowledge of our condition and affairs, as to be a reaſonable ground and warrant to us to pray to them, yea, or to deſire them to pray for us; no tho this were done without any ſolemn circumſtances of Invocation. For they may very well know ſome things concerning us wherein their own comfort and happineſs is likewiſe concerned, and yet be ignorant of all the reſt of our affairs. This one thing we are ſure they know, becauſe our Saviour hath told us ſo; but we are ſure of no more. And there is neither equal reaſon for their knowledge of our other concernments, nor is there any revelation in Scripture to that purpoſe

2. *Secondly*, If God and the bleſſed Spirits above rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner, ſo ſhould we too: and not fret and murmur as the *Phariſees* here did. This is the temper of the Devil, and of very bad men, to regret and envy the good and happineſs of others. For it is reaſonable to believe, that proportionable to the *joy* that is in heaven at the repentance of a ſinner, is the *grief* and vexation of the Devil and his inſtruments, of evil ſpirits and wicked men. And as the Devil delights in deſtroying ſouls, and *goes about like a roaring lion ſeeking whom he may devour*; ſo no doubt he is in great rage and gnaſheth out of very diſcontent, when at any time he is fruſtrated of his hopes, and the prey which he thought himſelf ſure of is ſnatched out of his jaws. And thus we ſee it is with bad men, they do perſecute thoſe that forſake them and their wicked ways, and refuſe to go along with them *to the ſame exceſs of Riot*.

And this is no-where more viſible than among thoſe of the Church of *Rome*. How full of wrath and indignation are they againſt thoſe who out of pure conviction of the errors and corruptions of their Church come over to Ours? How do they perſecute them with ſlanders and reproaches and with all the effects of hatred and malice? So that many times they can ſcarce refrain from doing them a real miſchief, even where it is dangerous to themſelves to attempt it: As if they envied them the grace of God and the opportunity of being ſaved.

I know it is too natural to thoſe of all Communions, to be eager and fierce againſt thoſe that deſert them: And yet ſuppoſing they had the truth certainly on their ſide (which they cannot all have) I ſee no great reaſon for this temper and carriage: For why ſhould I caſt away my patience and my charity, becauſe another man hath made ſhipwrack of his faith? But I do not remember any where among mankind to have obſerved a more implacable malice, a more ſincere and hearty ill-will, than they of the Church of *Rome* do conſtantly expreſs towards thoſe that forſake them; nay tho they give never ſo modeſt and reaſonable an account of their change, and behave themſelves towards their old friends with all the kindneſs and compaſſion in the world; yet their hatred and indignation againſt them runs ſo high, that one may plainly ſee they would ſooner forgive a man the greateſt ſins that human nature can be guilty of, and the breach of all the ten Commandments, than this one Crime of leaving their Church, that is in truth of growing wiſer and better.

3. *Thirdly*,

3. *Thirdly*, The consideration of what hath been said should mightily inflame our zeal and quicken our industry and diligence for the conversion of sinners. For if the conversion of one soul be worth so much Labour and pains, and matter of such joy to the blessed God and good Spirits, what pains should not we take in so corrupt and degenerate an Age as this of ours; where impenitent sinners do so much abound, and the just are almost failed from among the children of men?

Our blessed Saviour indeed (according to the extraordinary decency of all his Parables) puts the case very charitably, and lays the supposition quite on the other side: if there were but one sinner in the world, or but one of a hundred, yet we should very zealously intend, and with all our might, the reduction of this one lost sheep; and should never be at rest till this single wandring soul were found and saved. But God knows this is not our case, but quite otherwise; which should quicken our endeavours so much the more, and make us bestir our selves to the utmost, having always in our minds that admirable saying of St. *James*, *He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.* He that knows the value of an immortal soul, and how fearful a thing it is to perish everlastingly, can think no pains too much to take to *save a soul from death.*

4. *Lastly*, What an argument and encouragement is here to repentance, even to the greatest of sinners? They, I am sure, stand most in need of it: And tho they of all others have the least reason to look for mercy; yet they shall not be refused; tho they be like the *Publicans* and *Heathens* among the *Jews*, who were not only reputed but many times really were the worst of men; tho like the *prodigal Son*, here in the Parable, they have run away from their Father, and *wasted their estate in* leud *and riotous courses*; yet whenever *they come to themselves* and are willing to return to their Father, to acknowledge their folly and repent of it, he is ready to receive them; nay much more ready to receive them than they can be to come to him: For when the Prodigal was but coming towards his Father, and *was yet afar off, the Father runs to meet him*, and embraceth him with as much kindness as if he had never offended him, and entertains him with more joy than if he had always continued with him.

How does the great God condescend to encourage our repentance, representing himself and all the blessed company of heaven as transported with joy at the conversion of a sinner, and almost setting a greater value upon repentance than even upon innocence it self? And if our heavenly Father, who hath been so infinitely offended and so highly provok'd by us beyond all patience, be so ready, so forward, so glad to receive us, and there be no hindrance, no difficulty, no discouragement on his part; is it possible after all this that we can be such fools and such enemies to our selves, as to be backward to our own happiness! All of us, the best of us, have too much cause for repentance; and I fear too many of us stand in need of that repentance intended by our Saviour in the Text, which consists in the change of our whole lives.

But I will not upbraid you with your faults; having no design to provoke, but only to persuade men. I leave it to every one's conscience to tell him how great a sinner, how grievous an offender he hath been. God knows we take no pleasure in mentioning the sins of men, but only in their amendment; and we would, if it were possible, even without minding them how bad they have been, persuade and encourage them to be better.

It is but a small consideration to tell you how much it would chear and comfort our hearts, and quicken our zeal and industry for the salvation of

ſouls, to ſee ſome fruit of our labours; that all our pains are not loſt, and that all the good counſel that is from hence tendred to you is not like rain falling upon the rocks, and ſhowers upon the ſands.

But I have much greater conſiderations to offer to you; That your Repentance will at once rejoice the heart of God, and Angels, and Men: that it is a returning to a right mind, and the reſtoring of you to your ſelves, to the eaſe and peace of your own conſciences, and to a capacity of being everlaſtingly happy: that it is to take pity upon your ſelves and your poor immortal ſouls; and to take due care to prevent that which is to be dreaded above all things, the being miſerable for ever: and laſt of all, That if thou wilt not repent now, the time will certainly come, and that perhaps in this life, when you ſhall ſee the greateſt need of repentance, and yet perhaps with miſerable *Eſau find no place for it, tho' you ſeek it carefully with tears*; when you *ſhall cry Lord, Lord, and the door ſhall be ſhut againſt you; and ſhall ſeek to enter, but ſhall not be able.* To be ſure in the other World you ſhall eternally repent to no purpoſe, and be continually lamenting your wretched condition without hopes of remedy; For *there ſhall be weeping and wailing* without effect, without intermiſſion, and without end.

And what cauſe have we to thank God that this is not yet our caſe, that we are yet on this ſide the pit of deſtruction, and the gulf of deſpair? O the infinite patience and boundleſs goodneſs of God to ſinners! With what clemency hath he ſpared us, and *ſuffered our manners* thus long? And with what kindneſs and concernment does he ſtill call upon us to leave our ſins and to return to him, as if in ſo doing we ſhould make him happy and not our ſelves? With what earneſt longings and deſires doth he wait and wiſh for our repentance, ſaying, *O that there were ſuch a heart in them! O that they would hearken unto my voice! When ſhall it once be?* Thus God is repreſented in *Scripture* as patiently attending and liſtning what effect his admonitions and counſels, his reproofs and threatnings will have upon ſinners, Jer. 8. 6. *I hearkened and I heard, but they ſpake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done? Every one turned to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battel.*

And is not this our caſe? God hath long waited for our repentance; and once a Year we ſolemnly pretend to ſet about it: But many of us hitherto, I fear, inſtead of returning to God have but more blindly and furiouſly run on in our courſe, *like the horſe that hath no underſtanding*; yea, in this more brutiſh than the Beaſt, that he ruſheth into the Battel without any conſideration of death or danger, and deſtroys himſelf without a ſyllogiſm: But we ſinners have Reaſon, and yet are mad; the greateſt part of evil-doers are ſufficiently ſenſible of the danger of their courſe, and convinced that eternal miſery and ruin will be the end of it; and yet, I know not how, they make a ſhift upon one pretence or other to diſcourſe and reaſon themſelves into it.

But becauſe *the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than a two-edged ſword*, and comes with a greater weight and force upon the minds of men than any human perſuaſion whatſoever, I will conclude all with thoſe ſhort and ſerious counſels and exhortations of God to ſinners by his holy Prophets.

Conſider and ſhew your ſelves men, O ye tranſgreſſors: Be inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee: ſeek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near: Repent and turn your ſelves from all your tranſgreſſions, ſo iniquity ſhall not be your ruin.

SERMON XVII.

Of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

MATTH. XII. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men: And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

THE occasion of these words of our blessed Saviour was the blasphemy of the *Pharisees* against that Divine Power by which he wrought his miracles, and particularly did cast out Devils. Which works of his, tho' they were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet they obstinately and maliciously imputed them to the power of the Devil. upon which our Saviour takes occasion to declare the danger of the sin, which he calls *blasphemine of the Holy Ghost*: and tells them that this was so great a sin above all other, that it is in a peculiar manner unpardonable. *Wherefore I say unto you*, &c.

For the explaining of these words, and the nature and unpardonableness of this sin, we will enquire into these four things:

First, What is the difference between speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, Wherein the Nature of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist.

Thirdly, In what sense this sin is here said to be peculiarly unpardonable. And,

Fourthly, Upon what account it is so.

1. What is the difference between *speaking against the Son of man and speaking against the Holy Ghost*. The reason of this enquiry is, because the Text plainly puts a great difference between them, tho' it be not obvious to discern where it lies. For our Saviour tells us, that *whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall never be forgiven him*: And yet this blasphemy of the *Pharisees* against the Holy Ghost was speaking against the Son of man. For to say he cast out Devils by the power of the Devil, tho' it was a blaspheming of the Holy Ghost by whose power he wrought these miracles, yet it was likewise a blaspheming of Christ himself, and was in effect to say, that he was no true Prophet nor did come from God, but was a Magician and Impostor. For

For the removing of this difficulty I shall not need to say as some learned men have done, That by *the Son of Man* is here to be understood any man, and that our Saviour is not particularly designed by it. That seems very hard, when our Saviour is so frequently in the Gospel called the *Son of Man*. And especially when St. *Luke* reciting these words, does immediately before give him this very title to put the matter out of all doubt, *Luke* 12. 8, 9, 10. *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the son of man also confess before the Angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the Angels of God.* Upon which it follows, *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him.* So that in all reason the Son of man is the very same person that had this Title given him in the foregoing words, *viz.* our blessed Saviour. So that I take it for granted, that by speaking against the Son of man is here meant speaking against Christ: And by speaking against him, as it is opposed to speaking against the Holy Ghost, is meant all those reproaches and contumelies which they cast upon our Saviour's person, without reflecting upon that divine power which he testified by his miracles. As their reproaching him with the meanness of his birth, *Is not this the Carpenter's son?* with the place of it (as they supposed) *out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet:* Their reflecting upon his life, saying that he was *a wine-bibber and a glutton, a friend of Publicans and sinners*; with many other calumnies which they maliciously cast upon him.

But by speaking against the Holy Ghost is meant their blaspheming and reproaching that divine power whereby he wrought his Miracles; which though it did at last likewise reflect upon our Saviour's person, yet it was an immediate reflection upon the Holy Ghost, and a blaspheming of him; and therefore it is called speaking against the Holy Ghost, by way of distinction or opposition to the other calumnies which they used against our Saviour; which were proper blasphemies and reproaches of his person, but not of the Holy Ghost also, as this was. This seems to me to be the true difference here intended by our Saviour between *speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost.* Let us in the

II. *Second* place, enquire wherein the *Nature* of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist. And the true Nature of this sin, tho' it be so plainly to be gathered from our Saviour's description of it, yet I know not how, a great many learned men have made a hard shift to mistake it. Some have made it to be *final Impenitency*, because that is unpardonable. But why that rather than any thing else that is bad should be called a blaspheming of the Holy Ghost, it is hard to give a reason. Others have placed the nature of it in a *wilful and obstinate opposition of the truth*; which though it be a great sin, and included in the sin here spoken of, or a concomitant of it; yet is there great reason to believe that this is not all that is here meant by it. Others would have it to consist in a malicious opposition of the Truth, *when men know and are convinced that it is the Truth*; which is a great sin indeed, if ever any man were guilty of it; but it is a great Question whether human nature be capable of it. A man may indeed have sufficient means of conviction, and yet not be convinc'd; but it is hardly imaginable that a man should oppose the truth when he is actually convinc'd that it is the truth. And to mention no more, others think it to consist in a renouncing of the truth *for fear of suffering*; which made *Francis Spira* to think that he had committed this sin.

But with all due respect to the judgment of others, I cannot think that any of these is the sin our Saviour here describes. As I shall endeavour

plainly

plainly to shew, by considering the occasion of our Saviour's mentioning of it, the persons upon whom our Saviour chargeth this sin, and upon what account he chargeth them with it.

At the 22d *Verse* of this *Chapter* there was brought to our Saviour *one possessed with a Devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him.* Upon this *the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?* that is, the *Messias.* The Pharisees hearing this, with great bitterness and contempt said, *This fellow doth not cast out Devils but by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils.* Upon this our Saviour represents to them the unreasonableness of this calumny; and that upon these two considerations: 1. That it was very unlikely that the Devil should lend him this power to use it against himself. *Every Kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation: and every City or House divided against it self shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself, how shall then his Kingdom stand?* 2. Our Saviour tells them, they might with as much reason attribute all Miracles to the Devil. There were those among themselves who cast out Devils in the name of the God of *Abraham, Isaac,* and *Jacob,* (as *Origen,* and *Tertullian,* and *Justin Martyr* tell us.) Of these our Saviour speaks, and asks the Pharisees *by what power they cast them out?* But they acknowledged that these did it by the power of God, and there was no cause but their malice, why they should not have acknowledged that he did it likewise by the same power, *Ver.* 27. *If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges*; that is, This may be sufficient to convince you of malice to me: *But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,* that is, the *Messias* is come; because he wrought these and other miracles to prove that he was the *Messias.* And then it follows, *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

So that the *Pharisees* are the persons charged with this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And their blasphemy was plainly this, that when he cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, they said he did it by the power of the Devil; they maliciously ascribed these works of the Holy Ghost to the Devil.

And that this is the ground why our Saviour chargeth them with this sin against the Holy Ghost, is yet more plain from St. *Mark,* Mark 3. 28, 29, 30. *Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said he hath an unclean Spirit:* That is, because the *Pharisees* charged him to be a Magician and to have a familiar Spirit, by whose assistance he did those works, when in truth he did them by the Spirit of God, therefore our Saviour declares them guilty of this sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, which should never be forgiven.

So that the nature of this sin did consist in a most malicious opposition to the utmost evidence that could be given to the truth of any Religion. Our blessed Saviour to shew that he was sent by God, and came from him, wrought miracles, such as did plainly evidence a Divine power and presence accompanying him. For in St. *Luke* he is said to do them *by the finger of God,* Luke 11. 20. *By the finger of God,* that is, to do such things as were undeniable evidences of the Divine power and presence. And this is the utmost testimony that God ever gave to any person that was sent by him. And the *Pharisees* were eye-witnesses of those miracles which our Saviour wrought, so that they could not deny them: Yet such was their opposition to him and

his Doctrine, that tho' they saw these things done by him, and could not deny the reality of them, yet rather than they would own him to be the *Messias* and his Doctrine to come from God, they most maliciously and unreasonably ascribed them to the power of the Devil. And this was the blasphemy which they were guilty of against the Holy Ghost. And herein lay the greatness of their sin, in resisting the evidence of those miracles which were so plainly wrought by the Holy Ghost; and which though themselves saw, yet they maliciously imputed them to the Devil, rather than they would be convinced by them. And this is so very plain, that hardly any man that considers our Saviour's discourse upon this occasion can otherwise determine the nature of this sin, especially if he do but attend to those remarkable words which I cited before, *Mark* 3. 29. *But he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said he hath an unclean spirit.* I come now to the

III. *Third* thing I propounded, *namely*, in what sense this sin is here said to be peculiarly *unpardonable?* For this sin our Saviour positively affirms to be in this different from all other sins, that it is capable of no pardon: *I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men:* And to shew what he means by the not forgiving of it, he tells us, that eternal punishment shall follow it in the other world. *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Which S. *Mark* expresseth more plainly, that it shall bring those who are guilty of it to *eternal damnation*, Mark 3. 29. *He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is liable to eternal damnation.* So that when our Saviour says, *it shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come*, he does not intend to insinuate that some sins which are not forgiven in this world may be forgiven in the other; but in these words he either alludes to the opinion of the *Jews* concerning the effect of the highest excommunication, the sentence whereof they held not to be reversible, neither in this world nor the other; or else the reason of this expression may probably be to meet with a common and false opinion amongst the *Jews*, which was, That some sins which are not pardoned to men in this life, may by sacrifices be expiated in the other; and therefore he says it shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor the other. And S. *Mark* more plainly, that those who are guilty of it shall *never have forgiveness*, but *be liable to eternal damnation.* So that our Saviour's meaning seems plainly to be this, that this sin is altogether incapable of forgiveness I know some have endeavoured to mollify this matter, but (I think) without sufficient reason. *Grotius* understands the words *comparatively*, that any sort of sin shall sooner be forgiven than this against the Holy Ghost; and that our Saviour only intended to express the greatness and heinousness of this sin above others, in which respect the pardon of it would be more difficult than of any other sin; but yet that the case of such a person is not absolutely desperate: But if our Saviour had intended to say that this sin was absolutely unpardonable, I would fain know how could he have expressed the matter in higher and fuller words? Dr. *Hammond* mollifies the words another way, that this sin shall never be pardoned but upon a *particular repentance* for it: As if our Saviour's meaning was, that a general repentance, which was sufficient for sins of Ignorance, would not be sufficient in this case, but there must be a particular repentance for it, without which it would never be pardoned. But this is by no means agreeable to the scope of

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our *Saviour's* discourse: Because he plainly intends to difference this from all other sorts of sins, I say unto you, *all manner of sin and blasphemy* shall be forgiven unto men. But according to this interpretation our Saviour must mean that all other sins would be forgiven upon a general repentance; which is not true, for there are many other sins besides sins of Ignorance, there are wilful and heinous sins, such as wilful murther and adultery and basphemy, (that only excepted which is against the *Holy Ghost*) and the like gross sins, which all Divines hold shall not be forgiven but upon a *particular repentance.* So that this interpretation does not sufficiently difference this sin from all other sorts of sins, which is yet very plain our Saviour intended to do. It remains then that these words must in all reason be understood absolutely, that the persons that are guilty of this great sin shall never have it forgiven unto them. And it may be this will not seem so harsh when we have considered in the

IV. *Fourth* place, *how* it comes to pass that this sin is above all others incapable of pardon: and that, upon these two accounts.

First, Because by this sin men resist their last remedy, and oppose the best and utmost means of their conviction. What can God be imagined to do more to convince a man of a Divine Revelation, or of the truth of any Doctrine or message that comes from him than to work miracles to this purpose? And what greater assurance can men have that miracles are wrought, than to be eye-witnesses of them themselves? And if men will resist such evidence, what can God do more for their satisfaction? If when men see plain miracles wrought they will say that it is not the power of God that does them, but the power of the Devil: And if when men see the Devils cast out, they will say that the Devil conspires against himself, this is to outface the Sun at Noon-day, and there is no way left to convince such perverse persons of the truth of any Divine Revelation. So that there is no remedy but such persons must continue in their opposition to the truth. For this is such a sin as does in its own nature shut out and prevent all remedy. And he that thus perversly and maliciously opposeth the truth, must upon the same grounds unavoidably continue in his opposition to it; because there is nothing left to be done for his conviction, more than is already done. If God should send a person immediately from Heaven to him to convince him of his error, he can give him no greater testimony that he comes from God than miracles: And if when God enables that person to work these by the power of his Spirit, this man will obstinately impute them to the power of the Devil, he defeats all the imaginable means of his own conviction. So that it is no wonder if that sin be unpardonable, which resists the last and utmost means which God hath ever yet thought fit to use to bring men to repentance and salvation. And if God were willing to reveal himself and the way to pardon and salvation to such a one, he doth by this very temper and disposition render himself incapable of being satisfied and convinced concerning any Divine Revelation.

Secondly, Because this sin is of that high nature that God is therefore justly provoked to withdraw his grace from such persons; and it is probable, resolved so to do; without which grace they will continue impenitent. There is no doubt but God, if he will, can work so powerfully upon the minds of men by his Grace and Spirit, as to convince the most obstinate: and supposing them to be covinced and repent, it cannot be denied but that they would be forgiven. And therefore when our Saviour here says they shall not be forgiven, it is reasonable to suppose that he means that

when persons are come to that degree of obstinacy and malice God will (as justly he may) withdraw his grace from them: *His Spirit will not strive with them* to overcome their obstinacy, but will leave them to the byass of their own perverse and malicious minds; which will still engage them in a further opposition to the truth, and finally sink them into perdition. So that being deserted by God, and for want of the necessary help and aid of his grace (justly withdrawn from them) continuing finally impenitent, they become incapable of forgiveness both in this world and that which is to come. And there is nothing that can seem harsh or unreasonable in this, to those who grant (as I think all men do) that God may be so provoked by men as justly to withdraw his grace from them in this life, that grace which is necessary to their repentance. And surely if any provocation be likely to do it, this cannot be denied to be of all others the greatest, obstinately and maliciously to oppose the utmost evidence that God ever gave to the truth of any doctrine revealed by him. And of this the *Pharisees*, who are here charged with this sin against the Holy Ghost, were notoriously guilty in resisting the clear evidence of our Saviour's miracles.

And thus I have done with the *four* things I propounded to enquire into from these words, *namely*, The difference between speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost; wherein the nature of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost does consist; and in what sense this sin is said to be unpardonable; and upon what account it is so, *namely*, because men by this sin resist their last remedy, and oppose the best and utmost means of their conviction: And because it may reasonably be supposed that upon a provocation of this high nature, God may and is resolved to withdraw that grace from such persons which is necessary to their repentance, without which their sin remains for ever unpardonable.

All that now remains is to make this discourse some way or other useful to our selves. And it may very well serve to these *two* purposes. *First*, To comfort some very good and pious persons, who are liable to despair out of an apprehension that they have committed *this sin*. *Secondly*, To caution others against the approaches to it.

1. *First*, To comfort some very good and pious persons, who are liable to despair upon an apprehension that they have committed this great and unpardonable sin; and consequently are utterly incapable of ever being restored to the mercy and favour of God. And nothing can be more for the comfort of such persons than to understand aright what the nature of this sin was, and wherein the heinousness of it doth consist; which I have endeavoured to manifest. And if this be the nature of it which I have declared, as it seems very plain that it is, then I cannot see how any person *now* is likely to be in those circumstances as to be capable of committing it. And being a sin of so heinous a nature, and declared by our Saviour to be absolutely unpardonable, there is no reason to extend it beyond the case to which our Saviour applies it; which was the resisting of the evidence of the miracles which were wrought for the truth of Christianity, by those who were eye-witnesses of them, *that is*, by those who had the utmost assurance of them that human nature is capable of. And not only a bare resistance of that evidence, but with a very malicious circumstance, so as to impute those works which were wrought by the *Holy Ghost* to the power of the *Devil*. This was the case of the *Pharisees* whom our Saviour chargeth with this sin. And no body hath warrant to extend this sin any further than this case: and without good warrant it would be the most uncharitable thing in the world to extend it any further.

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That which comes neareſt to it, both in the heinouſneſs of the crime and the unpardonableneſs of it, is *total Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity* after the embracing of it, and full of conviction of the truth of it. And this the Scripture ſeems to place if not in the ſame rank, yet very near to it. And of this the Apoſtle ſpeaks very often in the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews* under the name of *unbelief*, and *ſin* by way of eminence, as being the great *ſin* that Chriſtians were in danger of falling into, called in that *Epiſtle* (*Heb.* 12. 1.) ἡ εὐπερίστατος ἁμαρτία, the *ſin* which Chriſtians, by reaſon of the *circumſtances* they were then in, were eſpecially ſubject to: And he parallels it with the caſe of the *Jews* in the wilderneſs, concerning whom *God ſware that they ſhould not enter into his reſt*, *namely* the earthly *Canaan* which was a type of *Heaven*, Chap. 3. ver. 18. And Chap. 6. ver. 4, 5, 6. more expreſly; *For it is impoſſible that thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they ſhould fall away, to renew them again to repentance.* Where by *impoſſible*, the leaſt that can be meant is that it is extremely difficult for ſuch perſons to recover themſelves by repentance. And 'tis obſervable that thoſe perſons are ſaid to have been *partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*, by which is meant that they were endued with a power of miracles by the *Holy Ghoſt*, or were under the conviction of them as having ſeen them wrought by others. So that this Apoſtacy may be ſaid in that reſpect to be *a ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. So likewiſe, *Chap.* 10. *verſe* 26. *If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth* (that is, if we apoſtatize from Chriſtianity after we have embraced the profeſſion of it, as appears plainly from the Scope of the Apoſtle's diſcourſe) *there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin:* which expreſſion declares this ſin either to be unpardonable, or ſomething very like it. And at the 29*th verſe*, thoſe perſons are ſaid to *tread under foot the Son of God, and to do deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace.* Which ſignifies that the ſin there ſpoken of is more immediately committed againſt the Holy Spirit of God. St. *Peter* likewiſe declares the great danger of this ſin, 2 *Pet.* 2. 20. *If after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning.* St. *John* likewiſe ſeems to ſpeak of this *ſin* of *Apoſtacy*, and to call it *a ſin unto death:* Diſcouraging Chriſtians rather, from praying for thoſe who were fallen into it; which gives great ſuſpicion that he looked upon it as hardly pardonable, 1 John 5. 16. *If any man ſee his brother ſin a ſin not unto death, he ſhall ask, and he ſhall give him life for thoſe that ſin not unto death. There is a ſin unto death, I do not ſay that he ſhall pray for it.* Now that by *the ſin unto death* the *Apoſtle* here means *Apoſtacy* from the *Chriſtian Religion* to the *Heathen Idolatry* ſeems extremely probable from what follows, *ver.* 18. *We know that whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not, but keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not*; that is, he preſerveth himſelf from Idolatry, which the Devil had ſeduced the world into, *ver.* 19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedneſs*, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, *in the wicked one*; that is, is under the power of the Devil; *and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us underſtanding to know him that is true*; that is, to diſtinguiſh between the true God and Idols. And then it follows, *This is the true God, and eternal life: Little children keep your ſelves from Idols.* Which laſt caution is a key to the underſtanding of all the reſt, and makes it very probable that the ſin unto death is Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity unto Idolatry: Otherwiſe it is hard to imagine how the laſt clauſe comes in, *Little children*

keep your selves from Idols. And this is that sin which of all other approacheth nearest to this *sin against the Holy Ghost* which our Saviour speaks of, and concerning the pardonableness of which the Scripture seems to speak very doubtfully. But if it were of the same unpardonable nature, yet this can be no trouble to those persons I am speaking of, who cannot but know themselves to be far enough from the guilt of this sin.

As for those other sins which by some are taken to be the sins against the Holy Ghost, they are either such as perhaps no man is capable of committing, as a *malicious opposition to the truth when I am convinced and know it to be the truth:* For this seems to be a contradiction, to know any thing to be the truth and to believe it to be so, and yet to oppose it; because the understanding can no more oppose truth as truth, than the will can refuse good as good. Or else, they are such as no man can know he is guilty of in this life; as, *final impenitency,* which supposeth a man to live and die without repentance. Or else, such as I think no good man is incident to; as, *a malicious and perverse opposing of the truth after sufficient means of conviction.* However, none of these are that which the Scripture describes to be the *sin against the Holy Ghost,* as I have already shewn.

But still there are two things which usually trouble honest and well-meaning persons, but are rather the effects of Melancholy than any reasonable ground of trouble. Some think that every *deliberate sin* against knowledge, and after conviction, is *the sin against the Holy Ghost.* This is acknowledged to be a very great aggravation of sin, and such as calls for a great and particular repentance; but does by no means render a man incapable of forgiveness. Others are troubled with *blasphemous thoughts,* and those they think to be the *sin against the Holy Ghost.* But this is generally the mere effects of Melancholy, and the persons that are troubled with these black thoughts are no ways consenting to them, but they rise in their minds perfectly against their wills and without any approbation of theirs: And in this case they are so far from being the unpardonable sin, that I hope, yea and verily believe, they are no sins at all, but the mere effects of a bodily distemper; and no more imputed to us than the wild and idle ravings of a man in a frenzy or a fever. And God forbid that the natural effects of a bodily disease should bring guilt upon our souls. So that these persons have reason enough for comfort; but the misery is, their present distemper renders them incapable of it.

2. *Secondly,* The other Use I would make of this discourse is, to caution men against the *degrees and approaches* of this sin. For if the sin against the Holy Ghost be of such a high nature and so unpardonable, then all approaches to it are very dreadful. Such as are, *prophane scoffing at Religion,* and the *Holy Spirit* of God which dwells in good men: *Abuse of the Holy Scriptures,* which were indited by the Spirit of God: *Perverse infidelity,* notwithstanding all the evidence which we have for the truth of Christianity, and sufficient assurance of the Miracles wrought for the confirmation of it brought down to us by credible History, though we are not eye-witnesses of them: *Obstinacy in a sinful and vicious course,* notwithstanding all the motives and arguments of the Gospel to persuade men to repentance. *Sinning against the clear conviction of our Consciences, and the motions and suggestions of God's Holy Spirit* to the contrary. *Malicious opposing of the truth* when the Arguments for it are very plain and evident to any impartial and unprejudiced mind, and when he that opposeth the Truth hath no clear satisfaction in his own mind to the contrary, but suffers himself to be furiously and headily carried on in his opposition to it. These are all sins of a

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very high nature, and of the nearest affinity with this great and unpardonable sin, of any that can easily be instanced in. And though God, to encourage the repentance of men, have not declared them unpardonable, yet they are great provocations; and if they be long continued in, we know not how soon God may withdraw his Grace from us, and suffer us to be *hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Be ready then to entertain the truth of God whenever it is fairly propounded to thee, and with such evidence as thou art willing to accept in other matters where thou hast no prejudice nor interest to the contrary. Do nothing contrary to thy known duty, but be careful in all things to obey the Convictions of thine own Conscience, and to yield to the good motions and suggestions of God's *Holy Spirit*, who works secretly upon the minds of men, and inspires us many times gently with good thoughts and inclinations, and is griev'd when we do not comply with them; and after many repulses will at last withdraw himself from us, and leave us to be assaulted by the temptations of the Devil, and to be hurried away by our own lusts into ruin and perdition.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

The Example of Jesus in doing good.

ACTS X. 38.

----- *Who went about doing good.*

WHEN Almighty God designed the Reformation of the World and the restoring of Man to the Image of God, the Pattern after which he was first made, he did not think it enough to give us the most perfect Laws of holiness and virtue; but hath likewise set before us a living Pattern, and a familiar example to excite and encourage us, to go before us and shew us the way, and as it were to lead us by the hand in the obedience of those Laws. Such is the Sovereign Authority of God over men that he might, if he had pleased, have only given us a Law written with his own hand, as he did to the people of *Israel* from Mount *Sinai:* but such is his Goodness, that he hath sent a great Ambassador from Heaven to us, *God manifested in the Flesh*, to declare and interpret his will and pleasure; and not only so, but to fulfil that Law himself, the observation whereof he requires of us. The bare Rules of a good life are a very dead and ineffectual thing in comparison of a living Example, which shews us the possibility and practicableness of our Duty; both that it may be done, and how to do it. Religion indeed did always consist in an Imitation of God, and in our resemblance of those excellencies which shine forth in the best and most perfect Being; but we may imitate him now with much greater ease and advantage, since God was pleased to become Man on purpose to shew us how men may become like to God. And this is one great End for which the Son of God came into the world, and *was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, and conversed so long and familiarly with mankind; that in his own Person and Life he might give us the Example of all that holiness and virtue which his Laws require of us. And as he was in nothing liker the Son of God than in being and doing good, so is he in nothing a fitter Pattern for our imitation than in that excellent Character given of him here in the Text, That *He went about doing good.*

In which words two things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, Our Saviour's great Work and Business in the World, which was to *do good:* ὃς διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν, who employed himself in being a Benefactor to Mankind. This refers more especially to his healing the bodily diseases and infirmities of men. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with Power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil.* Intimating to us by this instance of his doing good, that he who took so much pains to rescue mens Bodies from the power and possession of the Devil, would not let their Souls remain under his tyranny. But tho the Text instanceth only in one particular, yet this general expression of *doing good* comprehends all those several ways whereby he was beneficial to mankind.

Secondly,

Secondly, Here is his Diligence and Industry in this work, *He went about doing good*; he made it the great business and constant employment of his life. I shall propound to you the Pattern of our Saviour in both these particulars.

I. His great Work and Business in the world was to *do good*. The most pleasant and delightful, the most happy and glorious work in the world. It is a work of a large extent, and of an universal influence; and comprehends in it all those ways whereby we may be useful and beneficial to one another. And indeed it were pity that so good a thing should be confined within narrow bounds and limits. It reacheth to the Souls of men, and to their Bodies; and is conversant in all those ways and kinds whereby we may serve the Temporal or Spiritual good of our Neighbour, and promote his present and his future happiness. What our Blessed Saviour did in this kind, and we in imitation of him ought to do, I shall reduce to these two Heads. *First*, Doing good to the Souls of men and endeavouring to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. *Secondly*, The procuring of their temporal good and contributing as much as may be to their happiness in this present life.

1. Doing good to the *Souls* of men and endeavouring to promote their *spiritual* and *eternal* happiness, by good Instruction, and by good Example.

First, By good *Instruction*. And under Instruction I comprehend all the means of bringing men to the knowledge of their Duty, and exciting them to the practice of it; by instructing their Ignorance, and removing their Prejudices, and rectifying their Mistakes, by Persuasion and by Reproof; and by making lasting Provision for the promoting of these Ends.

By instructing mens Ignorance. And this is a duty which every man owes to another as he hath opportunity, but especially to those who are under our care and charge, our Children and Servants and near Relations, those over whom we have a special authority and a more immediate influence. This our Blessed Saviour made his great work in the world, to instruct all sorts of persons in the things which concerned the Kingdom of God, and to direct them in the way to eternal Happiness; by publick teaching, and by private conversation, and by taking occasion from the common occurrences of human life, and every object that presented it self to him, to instil good counsel into men, and to raise their minds to the consideration of divine and heavenly things. And though this was our Saviour's great Employment, and is theirs more particularly whose Office it is to teach others; yet every man hath private opportunities of instructing others, by admonishing them of their duty, and by directing them to the best means and helps of knowledge; such as are Books of Piety and Religion, with which they that are rich may furnish those who are unable to provide for themselves.

And then by removing mens Prejudices against the Truth, and rectifying their Mistakes. This our Saviour found very difficult; the generality of those with whom he had to do being strongly prejudiced against him and his Doctrine by false Principles, which they had taken in by Education, and been trained up to by their Teachers. And therefore he used a great deal of meekness in instructing those that opposed themselves, and exercised abundance of patience in bearing with the infirmities of men, and their dulness and slowness of capacity to receive the Truth.

And this is great Charity, to consider the inveterate Prejudices of men; especially those which are rooted in education, and which men are confirmed in by the reverence they bear to those that have been their Teachers. And great Allowance is to be given to men in this case, and time to bethink themselves and to consider better. For no man that is in an Error thinks he is so; and therefore if we go violently to rend their Opinions from them, they will but hold them so much the faster; but if we have patience to unrip them by degrees, they will at last fall in pieces of themselves.

And when this is done, the way is open for Counsel and Persuasion. And this our Saviour administred in a most powerful and effectual manner, by encouraging men to Repentance, and by representing to them the infinite advantages of obeying his Laws, and the dreadful and dangerous consequences of breaking of them. And these are arguments fit to work upon Mankind, because there is something within us that consents to the equity and reasonableness of God's Laws. So that whenever we persuade men to their duty, how backward soever they may be to the practice of it, being strongly addicted to a contrary course, yet we have this certain advantage, that we have their Consciences and the most inward sense of their minds on our side, bearing witness that what we counsel and persuade them to is for their good.

And if need be we must add Reproof to Counsel. This our Saviour did with great freedom, and sometimes with sharpness and severity, according to the condition of the persons he had to deal withal. But because of his great Authority; being *a Teacher* immediately *sent from God*, and of his intimate knowledge of the hearts of men, he is not a Pattern to us in all the circumstances of discharging this duty; which, if any other, requires great prudence and discretion if we intend to do good, the only end to be aimed at in it. For many are fit to be reproved whom yet every man is not fit to reprove; and in that case we must get it done by those that are fit, and great regard must be had to the time and other circumstances of doing it, so as it may most probably have its effect.

I will mention but one way of Instruction more, and that is by making lasting provision for that purpose: as by founding Schools of Learning, especially to teach the Poor to read, which is the Key of Knowledge; by building of Churches and endowing them; by buying or giving in Impropriations, or the like. These are large and lasting ways of teaching and instructing others, which will continue when we are dead and gone; as it is said of *Abel*, that *being dead he yet speaks*. And this our Saviour virtually did by appointing his Apostles after he had left the World to *go and teach all Nations*, and ordering a constant succession of Teachers in his Church to instruct men in the Christian Religion, together with an honourable Maintenance for them. This we cannot do in the way that he did who had *all power in heaven and earth*, but we may be subservient to this Design in the ways that I have mentioned. Which I humbly commend to the consideration of those whom God hath blessed with great Estates and made capable of effecting such great works of Charity.

Secondly, Another way of doing good to the Souls of men is by good *Example*. And this our Blessed Saviour was in the utmost perfection. For he *fulfilled all righteousness*, *had no sin*, *neither was guile found in his mouth*. And this we should endeavour to be, as far as the frailty of our nature and imperfection of our present state will suffer. For good example is an unspeakable benefit to mankind, and hath a secret power and influence upon those with whom we converse, to form them into the same disposition and manners.

manners. It is a living Rule, that teacheth men without trouble, and lets them see their faults without open reproof and upbraiding. Besides that it adds great weight to a man's counsel and perswasion, when we see that he advises nothing but what he does, nor exacts any thing from others from which he himself desires to be excused. As on the contrary, nothing is more cold and insignificant than good counsel from a bad man, one that does not obey his own precepts, nor follow the advice which he is so forward to give to others.

These are the several ways of doing good to the *Souls* of men, wherein we who are the Disciples of the Blessed *Jesus* ought in imitation of his Example to exercise our selves according to our several capacities and opportunities. And this is the noblest Charity, and the greatest kindness that can be shewn to humane nature; it is in the most excellent sense to *give eyes to the blind*, to *set the prisoners at liberty*, to rescue men out of the saddest slavery and captivity, and to *save Souls from death*. And it is the most lasting and durable benefit, because it is to do men good to all eternity.

2. The other way of being beneficial to others is, by procuring their *Temporal* good, and contributing to their happiness in this present life. And this, in subordination to our Saviour's great design of bringing men to eternal Happiness, was a great part of his business and employment in this world. He went about *healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases*, and rescuing the Bodies of Men from the power and possession of the Devil.

And though we cannot be beneficial to men in that miraculous manner that he was; yet we may be so in the use of ordinary means: We may comfort the afflicted, and vindicate the oppressed, and do a great many acts of Charity which our Saviour by reason of his poverty could not do without a Miracle: We may supply the necessities of those that are in want, *feed the hungry, and cloath the naked, and visit the sick*, and minister to them such comforts and remedies as they are not able to provide for themselves: We may take a Child that is poor and destitute of all advantages of Education, and bring him up in the knowledge and fear of God, and without any great expence put him into a way wherein by his diligence and industry he may arrive to a considerable fortune in the world, and be able afterwards to relieve hundreds of others. Men glory in raising great and magnificent Structures, and find a secret pleasure to see Sets of their own planting to grow up and flourish: But surely it is a greater and more glorious work to build up a Man, to see a Youth of our own planting, from the small beginnings and advantages we have given him, to grow up into a considerable fortune, to take root in the world, and to shoot up to such a height and spread his branches so wide, that we who first planted him may our selves find comfort and shelter under his shadow. We may many times with a small liberality shore up a Family that is ready to fall, and struggles under such necessities that it is not able to support it self. And if our minds were as great as sometimes our estates are, we might do great and publick works of a general and lasting advantage, and for which many Generations to come might call us blessed. And those who are in the lowest condition may do great good to others by their Prayers, if they themselves be as good as they ought. For *the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. The intercession of those who are in favour with God (as all good men are) are not vain wishes, but many times effectual to procure that good for others which their own endeavours could never have effected and brought about.

I have done with the first thing. The great Work and Business which our Blessed Saviour had to do in the world, and that was to *do good.* I proceed to the

II. Second thing contained in the Text, Our Saviour's Diligence and Industry in this work, *He went about doing good.* He made it the great business and constant employment of his life, he travelled from one place to another to seek out opportunities of being useful and beneficial to Mankind. And this will fully appear if we briefly consider these following particulars:

First, How unwearied our blessed Saviour was in doing good. He made it his only business, and spent his whole life in it. He was not only ready to do good to those that came to him and gave him opportunity for it, and besought him to do it, but went himself from one place to another to seek out objects to exercise his Charity upon. He went to those who could not, and to those who would not come to him; for so it is written of him, *He came to seek and to save that which was lost.* He was contented to spend whole days in this work, to live in a crowd and to be almost perpetually opprest with company; and when his Disciples were moved at the rudeness of the People in pressing upon him, he rebuked their impatience, and, for the pleasure he took in doing good made nothing of the trouble and inconvenience that attended it.

Secondly, If we consider how much he denied himself in the chief comforts and conveniences of humane life that he might do good to others. He neglected the ordinary refreshments of nature, his meat and drink and sleep, that he might attend this work. He was at every bodies beck and disposal to do them good. When he was doing cures in one place, he was sent for to another, and he either went or sent healing to them, and did by his word at a distance what he could not come in person to do. Nay he was willing to deny himself in one of the dearest things in the world, his reputation and good name. He was contented to do good, though he was ill thought of and ill spoken of for it. He would not refuse to do good on the Sabbath-day, though he was accounted prophane for so doing. He knew how scandalous it was among the *Jews* to keep company with *Publicans* and Sinners, and yet he would not decline so good a work for all the ill words they gave him for it.

Thirdly, If we consider the malicious opposition and sinister construction that his good deeds met withall. Never did so much goodness meet with so much enmity, *endure* so many affronts and so much *contradiction of Sinners.* This great Benefactor of Mankind was hated and persecuted as if he had been a publick Enemy. While he was instructing them in the meekest manner, they were ready to stone him for telling them the truth; and when the fame of his Miracles went abroad, though they were never so useful and beneficial to mankind, yet upon this very account, they conspire against him and seek to take away his life. Whatever he said or did, though never so innocent, never so excellent, had some bad interpretation put upon it, and the great and shining Virtues of his life were turned into Crimes and matter of accusation. For his casting out of Devils, he was called a Magician; for his endeavour to reclaim men from their Vices, *a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; for his free and obliging Conversation, *a Wine-bibber and a Glutton.* All the benefits which he did to men, and the blessings which he so liberally shed among the people, were construed to be a design of Ambition and Popularity, and done with an intention to

move

move the people to Sedition, and to make himself a King: Enough to have discouraged the greatest goodness, and have put a damp upon the most generous mind, and to make it sick and weary of well-doing. For what more grievous than to have all the good one does ill interpreted, and the best actions in the world made matter of calumny and reproach?

And then lastly, If we consider how chearfully, notwithstanding all this, he persevered and continued in well-doing. It was not only his business, but his delight; *I delight* (says he) *to do thy will, O my God.* The pleasure which others take in the most natural actions of life, in eating and drinking when they are hungry he took in doing good, it was *his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.* He plied this work with so much diligence as if he had been afraid he should have wanted time for it. *I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.* And when he was approaching towards the hardest and most unpleasant part of his Service, but of all others the most beneficial to us, I mean his Death and Sufferings, he was not at ease in his mind till it was done; *How am I straitned* (says he) *till it be accomplished.* And just before his Suffering, with what Joy and Triumph does he reflect upon the good he hath done in his life? *Father, I have glorified thee upon earth, and finished the work which thou hast given me to do.* What a blessed Pattern is here of diligence and industry in doing good? how fair and lovely a Copy for Christians to write after?

And now that I have set it before you, it will be of excellent use to these two purposes: To shew us our Defects; and to excite us to our Duty.

I. To shew us our Defects. How does this blessed Example upbraid those who live in a direct contradiction to it; who instead of *going about doing good,* they are perpetually intent upon doing mischief; who are wise and active to do evil, but to do good have no inclination, no understanding? And those likewise who, though they are far from being so bad, yet wholly neglect this blessed work of doing good? They think it very fair to do no evil, to hurt and injure no man: but if Preachers will be so unreasonable as to require more, and will never be satisfied till they have persuaded them out of their estate, and to give to the poor till they have almost impoverish'd themselves, they desire to be excused from this importunity. But we are not so unreasonable neither. We desire to put them in mind, that to be charitable according to our power is an indispensible duty of Religion: that we are commanded not only to abstain from evil, but to do good; and that our blessed Saviour hath given us the Example of both; he did not only *do no sin,* but *he went about doing good*; And upon this nice point it was that the young rich man in the Gospel and his Saviour parted. He had *kept the Commandments from his youth, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal:* he had been very careful of the negative part of Religion; But, when it came to parting with his Estate and *giving to the poor,* this he thought too hard a condition, and upon this he forsook our Saviour and forfeited the Kingdom of Heaven. And it is very considerable, and ought to be often and seriously thought upon, that our Saviour describing to us the Day of Judgment represents the great Judge of the World acquitting and condemning men according to the good which they had done, or neglected to do in ways of mercy and charity; for feeding the hungry, and cloathing the naked, and visiting the sick, or for neglecting to do these

things: Than which nothing can more plainly and effectually declare to us the necessity of doing good in order to the obtaining eternal Happiness.

There are many indeed who do not altogether neglect the doing of this work, who yet do in a great measure prevent and hinder themselves from doing it as they ought, under a pretence of being employed about other Duties and parts of Religion. They are so taken up with the exercises of Piety and Devotion in private and publick, with Prayer, and reading and hearing Sermons, and preparing themselves for the Sacrament, that they have scarce any leisure to mind the doing of good and charitable offices to others: or if they have, they hope God will pardon his servants in this thing, and accept of their Piety and Devotion instead of all. But they ought to consider, that when these two parts of Religion come in competition, Devotion is to give way to Charity, *Mercy* being better than *Sacrifice*: That the great End of all the Duties of Religion, Prayer, and reading and hearing the Word of God, and receiving the holy Sacrament is to dispose and excite us to do good, to make us more ready and forward to every good work: and that it is the greatest mockery in the world, upon pretence of using the means of Religion to neglect the end of it; and because we are always preparing our selves to do good, to think that we are for ever excused from doing any.

Others are taken up in contending for the Faith, and spend all their zeal and heat about some controversies in Religion; and therefore they think it but reasonable that they should be excused from those meaner kind of Duties, because they serve God, as they imagine in a higher and more excellent way; as those who serve the King in his Wars use to be exempted from Taxes and Offices. But do those men consider upon what kind of Duties more especially our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles lay the great weight and stress of Religion? that it is to the Meek, and Merciful, and Peaceable that our Saviour pronounceth Blessedness? that *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction?* that *the wisdom which is from above is full of mercy and good works?* These are the great and weighty things of Religion, which, whatever else we do, ought not to be left undone. Do they consider that a right Faith is wholly in order to a good Life, and is of no value any further than it hath an influence upon it? So that whatever other Duties we may be obliged to, nothing can excuse us from this. How much better is it to do good, to be really useful and beneficial to others, and how much more clearly and certainly our duty, than to quarrel about doubtful and uncertain opinions? Were men Christians indeed they would be so much delighted and taken up with this better work (more acceptable to God, and more profitable to men) that they could not find leisure, or if they could, they could not find in their hearts to employ all their time and zeal about things which are at so great a distance from the life and heart of Religion, as most of those Questions are which Christians at this day contend and languish about. Were we possessed with the true spirit of Christianity, these would be but dry and insipid and tastless things to us, in comparison of the blessed employment of doing good in a more real and substantial way. If the sincere love of God and our Neighbour were but once throughly kindled in our hearts, these pure and heavenly flames would in a great measure extinguish the unchristian heats of dispute and contention; as Fires here below are ready to languish and go out when the Sun in his full strength shines upon them.

II. But

II. But the hardeſt part of my task is yet behind, and it is ſtrange it ſhould be ſo; and that is to perſuade us to the imitation of this bleſſed Example. Let us *go and do likewiſe*; *let the ſame mind be in us that was in Chriſt Jeſus*; let us tread in the ſteps of the great God and the beſt Man that ever was, our bleſſed Saviour, who *went about doing good.* Methinks the work it ſelf is of that nature, that men ſhould not need to be courted to it by perſuaſion, nor urged by importunity. The very propoſal of the thing, and the Pattern which I have ſet before you, is temptation and allurement enough to a generous and well-diſpoſed mind. But yet to inflame you the more to ſo good a work, be pleaſed to dwell with me a little upon theſe following conſiderations:

Firſt, it is an argument of a great and generous mind, to employ our ſelves in doing good, to extend our thoughts and care to the concernments of others, and to uſe our power and endeavours for their benefit and advantage; becauſe it ſhews an inclination and deſire in us to have others happy as well as our ſelves.

Thoſe who are of a narrow and envious ſpirit, of a mean and ſordid diſpoſition, love to contract themſelves within themſelves, and like the *Hedgehog* to ſhoot out their quills at every one that comes near them. They take care of no body but themſelves, and fooliſhly think their own happineſs the greater becauſe they have it alone and to themſelves. But the nobleſt and moſt heavenly diſpoſitions think themſelves happieſt when others ſhare with them in their happineſs. Of all Beings God is the fartheſt removed from Envy, and the nearer any Creature approacheth to him in bleſſedneſs the farther it is off from this helliſh quality and diſpoſition. It is the temper of the Devil to grudge happineſs to others; he envied that Man ſhould be in Paradiſe when He was caſt out of Heaven.

Other Perfections are (as one ſays) of a more melancholick and ſolitary diſpoſition, and ſhine brighteſt when they are alone, or attained to but by a few; once make them common and they loſe their luſtre. But it is the nature of goodneſs to communicate it ſelf, and the farther it ſpreads the more glorious it is. God reckons it as one of his moſt glorious Titles, as the brighteſt Gem in his Diadem, *The Lord mighty to ſave.* He delights not to ſhew his Sovereignty in ruining the Innocent and deſtroying helpleſs Creatures; but in reſcuing them out of the jaws of Hell and Deſtruction. To the Devil belongs the Title of the *Deſtroyer.*

Without this quality of goodneſs all other Perfections would change their nature, and loſe their excellency. Great Power and Wiſdom would be terrible, and raiſe nothing but dread, and ſuſpicion in us: For Power without Goodneſs would be Tyranny and Oppreſſion, and Wiſdom would become Craft and Treachery. A Being endued with Knowledge and Power, and yet wanting Goodneſs, would be nothing elſe but an irreſiſtible Evil, and an omnipotent Miſchief. We admire Knowledge, and are afraid of Power, and ſuſpect Wiſdom: But we can heartily love nothing but Goodneſs, or ſuch Perfections as are in conjunction with it. For Knowedge and Power may be in a nature moſt contrary to God's; the Devil hath theſe perfections in an excelling degree. When all is done, nothing argues a great and generous mind but only Goodneſs; which is a propenſion and diſpoſition to make others happy, and a readineſs to do them all the good offices we can.

Secondly, To do Good is the moſt pleaſant employment in the World. It is natural; and whatever is ſo is delightful. We do like our ſelves whenever we relieve the wants and diſtreſſes of others. And therefore this Virtue among all other hath peculiarly entituled it ſelf to the name of *Humanity.* We anſwer our own Nature, and obey our Reaſon and ſhew our ſelves Men in

ſhewing

shewing Mercy to the miserable. Whenever we consider the evils and afflictions of others, we do with the greatest reason collect our Duty from our nature and inclination, and make our own wishes and desires and expectations from others a law and rule to our selves. And this is pleasant, to follow our nature, and to gratify the importunate dictates of our own Reason. So that the benefits we do to others are not more welcome to them that receive them, than they are delightful to us that do them. We ease our own nature and bowels, whenever we help and relieve those who are in want and necessity. As on the contrary, no man that hath not divested himself of humanity can be cruel and hard-hearted to others without feeling some pain in himself. There is no sensual pleasure in the world comparable to the delight and satisfaction that a good man takes in doing good. This *Cato* in *Tully* boasts of as the great comfort and joy of his old age, *That nothing was more pleasant to him than the Conscience of a well spent life, and the remembrance of many benefits and kindnesses done to others.* Sensual pleasures are not lasting, but presently vanish and expire; but that is not the worst of them, they leave a sting behind them, as the pleasure goes off.

——*Succedit frigida cura.*

Sadness and Melancholy come in the place of it, guilt and trouble and repentance follow it. But the pleasure of doing good remains after a thing is done, the thoughts of it lie easy in our minds, and the reflection upon it afterwards does for ever minister joy and delight to us. In a word, that frame of mind which inclines us to do good is the very temper and disposition of happiness. *Solomon*, after all his experience of worldly pleasures, pitches at last upon this as the greatest felicity of human life, and the only good use that is to be made of a prosperous and plentiful fortune, *Eccl.* 3. 12. *I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life.* And a greater and a wiser than *Solomon* had said that *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Thirdly, To employ our selves in doing good is to imitate the highest Excellency and Perfection. It is to be like God *who is good and doth good*, and to be like him in that which he esteems his greatest glory, and that is, his goodness. It is to be like the Son of God, who when he took our nature upon him, and lived in the world, *went about doing good.* It is to be like the blessed Angels, whose great employment it is to be *ministring Spirits for the good of others.* To be charitable and helpful and beneficial to others, is to be a good Angel and a Saviour and a God to men. And the Example of our blessed Saviour more especially is the great Pattern which our Religion propounds to us. And we have all the reason in the world to be in love with it; because that very Goodness which it propounds to our imitation, was so beneficial to our selves: when we our selves feel and enjoy the happy effects of that good which he did in the world, this should mightily endear the Example to us, and make us forward to imitate that love and kindness to which we are indebted for so many blessings, and upon which all our hopes of happiness do depend.

And there is this considerable difference between our Saviour's Charity to us, and ours to others: He did all purely for our sakes and for our benefit, whereas all the good we do to others is a greater good done to our selves. They are indeed beholden to us for the kindness we do them, and we to them for the opportunity of doing it. Every ignorant person that comes in our way to be instructed by us, every sinner whom we reclaim, every poor

poor man we relieve, is a happy opportunity of doing good to our ſelves, and of *laying up for our ſelves a good treaſure againſt the time which is to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.* By this principle the beſt and the happieſt man that ever was, governed his life and actions, eſteeming it a *more bleſſed thing to give than to receive.*

Fourthly, This is one of the greateſt and moſt ſubſtantial Duties of Religion; and next to the love and honour which we pay to God himſelf, the moſt acceptable ſervice that we can perform to him. It is one half of the Law, and next to the firſt and great Commandment, and very like unto it: like to it in the excellency of its nature, and in the neceſſity of its obligation. For *this commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God love his brother alſo.* The firſt Commandment excells in the dignity of the object; but the ſecond hath the advantage in the reality of its effects. For *our righteouſneſs extendeth not to God,* we can do him no real benefit: but our Charity to men is really uſeful and beneficial to them. For which reaſon God is contented, in many caſes, that the external Honour and Worſhip which by his poſitive command he requires of us, ſhould give way to that natural duty of Love and Mercy which we owe to one another. And to ſhew how great a value he puts upon Charity, he hath made it the great teſtimony of our love to himſelf; and for want of it, rejects all other profeſſions of love to him as falſe and inſincere. *If any man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?*

Fifthly, This is that which will give us the greateſt comfort when we come to die. It will then be no pleaſure to men to reflect upon the greateſt eſtates they have got, and the great places they have been advanced to, becauſe they are leaving theſe things, and they will ſtand them in no ſtead in the other world: *Riches profit not in the day of wrath:* But the conſcience of well-doing will refreſh our Souls even under the very pangs of death. With what contentment does a good man then look upon the good he hath done in his life? and with what confidence doth he look over into the other world, where he hath provided for himſelf *bags that wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens that faileth not?* For though our eſtates will not follow us into the other World, our good works will; tho we cannot carry our riches along with us, yet we may ſend them before us to make way for our reception into everlaſting habitations. In ſhort, works of Mercy and Charity will comfort us at the hour of death, and plead for us at the day of Judgment, and procure for us at the hands of a merciful God a glorious recompence at the reſurrection of the juſt. Which leads me to the

Laſt Conſideration I ſhall offer to you; which is the reward of doing good both in this world and the other. If we believe God himſelf, he hath made more particular and encouraging promiſes to this grace and virtue than to any other.

The advantages of it in This World are many and great. It is the way to derive a laſting bleſſing upon our eſtates. Acts of Charity are the beſt Deeds of Settlement. We gain the prayers and bleſſings of thoſe to whom we extend our charity, and it is no ſmall thing to have *the bleſſing of them that are ready to periſh to come upon us.* For God *hears the prayers of the deſtitute, and his ear is open to their Cry.* Charity is a great ſecurity to us in times of evil: and that not only from the ſpecial promiſe and providence of God, which are engaged to preſerve from want thoſe that relieve the neceſſities of others; but likewiſe from the nature of the thing, which makes way for its own reward in this world. He that is charitable to others provides

vides a ſupply and retreat for himſelf in the day of diſtreſs: For he provokes mankind by his example to like tenderneſs towards him, and prudently beſpeaks the commiſeration of others againſt it comes to be his turn to ſtand in need of it. Nothing in this world makes a man more and ſurer Friends than Charity and Bounty, and ſuch as will ſtand by us in the greateſt troubles and dangers. *For a good man* (ſays the Apoſtle) *one would even dare to die.* 'Tis excellent counſel of the Son of *Sirach*; *Lay up thy treaſure according to the Commandment of the moſt High, and it ſhall bring thee more profit than gold. Shut up thy Alms in thy ſtore-houſe, and it ſhall deliver thee from all affliction: It ſhall fight for thee againſt thine enemies, better than a mighty Shield and ſtrong Spear.* It hath ſometimes happened that the obligation that men have laid upon others by their Charity, hath in caſe of danger and extremity done them more kindneſs than all the reſt of their Eſtate could do for them; and their Alms have literally delivered them from death.

But what is all this to the endleſs and unſpeakable Happineſs of the Next life, where the returns of doing good will be vaſtly great beyond what we can now expect or imagine? For God takes all the Good we do to others as a debt upon himſelf, and he hath eſtate and treaſure enough to ſatisfy the greateſt obligations we can lay upon him. So that we have the Truth, and Goodneſs, and Sufficiency of God for our ſecurity, that what we ſcatter and ſow in this kind will grow up to a plentiful harveſt in the other world; and that all our pains and expence in doing good for a few days will be recompenced and crowned with the joys and glories of Eternity.

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

On the Fifth of *November*, 1678. Before the Honourable House of Commons.

LUKE IX. 55, 56.

But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; For the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.

AMONG many other things, which may justly recommend the *Christian Religion* to the approbation of mankind, the intrinsick goodness of it is most apt to make impression upon the Minds of serious and considerate men. The Miracles of it are the great external evidence and confirmation of its Truth and Divinity; but the morality of its Doctrines and Precepts, so agreeable to the best reason and wisest apprehensions of mankind, so admirably fitted for the perfecting of our natures, and the sweetning of the spirits and tempers of men, so friendly to humane Society, and every way so well calculated for the peace and order of the World. These are the things which our Religion glories in as her crown and excellency. *Miracles* are apt to awaken and astonish, and by a sensible and over-powering evidence to bear down the prejudices of Infidelity; but there are secret charms in *goodness* which take fast hold of the hearts of men, and do insensibly, but effectually, command our love and esteem.

And surely nothing can be more proper to the occasion of this Day, than a Discourse upon this Argument; which so directly tends to correct that unchristian spirit, and mistaken zeal, which hath been the cause of all our troubles and confusions, and had so powerful an influence upon that horrid Tragedy which was designed, now near upon fourscore years ago, to have been acted as upon this Day.

And that we may the better understand the reason of our Saviour's reproof here in the Text, it will be requisite to consider the occasion of this hot and furious zeal which appeared in some of his Disciples. And that was this: Our Saviour was going from *Galilee* to *Jerusalem*, and being to pass through a Village of *Samaria* he sent messengers before him to prepare entertainment for him; but the People of that Place would not receive him, because he was going to *Jerusalem*: the Reason whereof was, the *difference of Religion* which then was between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*. Of which I shall give you this brief account.

The *Samaritans* were originally that Colony of the *Assyrians* which we find in the Book of *Kings* was, upon the Captivity of the Ten Tribes, planted in *Samaria* by *Salmanassar*. They were Heathens, and worshipped their own Idols, till they were so infested with Lions, that for the redress of this mischief they desired to be instructed in the worship of the God of *Israel*,

hoping by this means to appeaſe the anger of the God of the Country; and then they worſhipped the God of *Iſrael* together with their own Idols; for ſo it is ſaid in the Hiſtory of the *Kings*, that *they feared the Lord, and ſerved their own Gods.*

After the Tribe of *Judah* were returned from the Captivity of *Babylon*, and the Temple of *Jeruſalem* was rebuilt, all the *Jews* were obliged by a ſolemn Covenant to put away their *Heathen* Wives. It happened that *Manaſſes*, a *Jewiſh* Prieſt, had married the Daughter of *Sanballat* the *Samaritan*; and being unwilling to put away his Wife, *Sanballat* excited the *Samaritans* to build a Temple upon Mount *Gerizim* near the City of *Samaria*, in oppoſition to the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, and made *Manaſſes* his Son-in-law Prieſt there.

Upon the building of this new Temple there aroſe a great feud between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, which in proceſs of time grew to ſo violent a hatred that they would not ſo much as ſhew common civility to one another. And this was the reaſon why the *Samaritans* would not receive our Saviour in his journey, becauſe they perceived he was going to worſhip at *Jeruſalem.*

At this uncivil uſage of our Saviour, *two* of his Diſciples, *James* and *John*, preſently take fire, and out of a well-meaning zeal for the honour of their Maſter, and of the true God, and of *Jeruſalem* the true place of his Worſhip, they are immediately for diſpatching out of the way theſe Enemies of God, and Chriſt, and the true Religion; theſe *Hereticks* and *Schiſmaticks*, for ſo they called one another. And to this end they deſire our Saviour to give them power to *call for fire from Heaven to conſume them*, as *Elias* had done in a like caſe, and that too not far from *Samaria*; and it is not improbable that their being ſo near the place where *Elias* had done the like before, might prompt them to this requeſt.

Our Saviour ſeeing them in this heat, notwithſtanding all the reaſons they pretended for their paſſion, and for all they ſheltered themſelves under the great Example of *Elias*, doth very calmly but ſeverely reprove this temper of theirs, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: for the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.*

Grotius obſerves, that theſe two excellent Sentences are left out in a *Manuſcript* that is in *England.* I cannot tell what *Manuſcript* he refers to; but if it were a Copy written out in the height of Popery, no wonder if ſome zealous Tranſcriber, offended at this paſſage, ſtruck it out of the Goſpel, being confident our Saviour would not ſay any thing that was ſo directly contrary to the current Doctrine and Practice of thoſe times. But thanks be to God this admirable ſaying is ſtill preſerved, and can never be made uſe of upon a fitter occaſion.

Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: That is, Ye own your ſelves to be my Diſciples, but do you conſider what ſpirit now acts and governs you? Not that *ſurely* which my Doctrine deſigns to mould and faſhion you into, which is not a furious and perſecuting and deſtructive ſpirit, but mild and gentle and ſaving; tender of the lives and intereſts of men, even of thoſe who are our greateſt Enemies: You ought to conſider, That you are not now under the rough and ſour Diſpenſation of the Law, but the calm and peaceable Inſtitution of the Goſpel; to which the ſpirit of *Elias*, though he was a very good man in his time, would be altogether unſuitable. God permitted it then, under that imperfect way of Religion; but now under the Goſpel it would be intolerable: For that deſigns univerſal love, and peace, and good-will: and now no difference of Religion, no pretence of zeal for God and Chriſt can warrant and juſtify this paſſionate and fierce, this vindictive and exterminating ſpirit. *For*

For the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them. He says indeed elsewhere, that he *was not come to send Peace, but a Sword*; which we are not to understand of the natural tendency of his Religion, but of the accidental event and effect of it, through the malice and perverseness of men: But here he speaks of the proper intention and design of his coming: *He* came not to kill and destroy, but *for the healing of the Nations*; for the salvation and redemption of Mankind, not only *from the wrath to come*, but from a great part of the evils and miseries of this life: *He* came to discountenance all fierceness and rage and cruelty in men, one towards another; to restrain and subdue that furious and unpeaceable spirit, which is so troublesome to the world, and the cause of so many mischiefs and disorders in it: And to introduce a Religion which consults not only the eternal salvation of mens souls, but their temporal peace and security, their comfort and happiness in this world.

The *words* thus explained contain this Observation, *That a revengeful, and cruel, and destructive Spirit is directly contrary to the design and temper of the Gospel, and not to be excused upon any pretence of zeal for God and Religion.*

In the prosecution of this Argument, I shall confine my discourse to these *Three* heads.

First, To shew the opposition of this spirit to the true Spirit and design of the Christian Religion.

Secondly, The unjustifiableness of it upon any pretence of zeal for God and Religion.

Thirdly To apply this Discourse to the occasion of this Day.

I. *First*, I shall shew *the opposition of this spirit to the true Spirit and design of the Christian Religion*: That it is directly opposite to the main and fundamental *Precepts* of the Gospel, and to the great *Patterns* and Examples of our Religion, our *Blessed Saviour*, and the *Primitive Christians*.

1. This spirit which our Saviour here reproves in his Disciples, is directly opposite to the main and fundamental *Precepts* of the Gospel; which command us to *love one another*, and *to love all men*, even our very *enemies*; and are so far from permitting us to persecute those who hate us, that they forbid us to hate those who persecute us: They require us to be *merciful as our Father which is in Heaven is merciful*; to be *kind* and *tender-hearted*, *forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*: And *to put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, meekness and long suffering*, and to *follow peace with all men*, and to *shew all meekness to all men*: And particularly the Pastors and Governors of the Church are especially charged to be of this temper, *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.* To all which *Precepts*, and many more that I might reckon up, nothing can be more plainly opposite than inhumane Cruelties and Persecutions, treacherous Conspiracies and bloody Massacres, a barbarous Inquisition, and a *holy League* to extirpate all that differ from us. And instead of *instructing in meekness those that oppose themselves*, to convert men with fire and faggot, and to teach them as *Gideon* did the *men of Succoth with briars and thorns*; and instead of waiting for their repentance and endeavouring to recover them out of the snare of the Devil, to put them quick into his hands, and to dispatch them to Hell as fast as is possible. If the precepts of Christianity can be contradicted, surely

it cannot be done more grosly and palpably than by such practices.

2. This spirit is likewise directly opposite to the great *Patterns* and Examples of our Religion, *our Blessed Saviour*, and the *Primitive Christians*. It was prophesied of our *Saviour* that he should be *the Prince of peace*, and should make it one of his great businesses upon earth, to make Peace in Heaven and earth, to reconcile Men to God and to one another, to take up all those feuds and to extinguish all those animosities that were in the World; to bring to agreement and a peaceable demeanour one towards another those that were most distant in their tempers and interests, to *make the lamb and the wolf lye down together, that there might be no more destroying nor devouring in all God's holy mountain*; *that is*, that *that* cruel and destructive spirit which prevail'd before in the world should then be banished out of all Christian societies.

And in conformity to these predictions, when our Saviour was born into the world the Angels sang that heavenly *Anthem*, *Glory to God in the highest*, *peace on earth, and good will among men*. And when he appeared in the world his whole life and carriage was gentle and peaceable, full of meekness and charity. His great business was to be beneficial to others, to seek and to save that which was lost; *he went about doing good*, to the bodies and to the souls of men: his miracles were not destructive to mankind, but healing and charitable. He could, if he had pleased, by his miraculous power have confounded his enemies, and have thundred out death and destruction against the Infidel World, as his pretended *Vicar* hath since done against Hereticks. But intending that his Religion should be propagated in human ways, and that Men should be drawn to the profession of it by the *bands of love*, and the *cords of a man*, by the gentle and peaceable methods of Reason and Persuasion; he gave no example of a furious zeal and religious rage against those who despised his Doctrine. It was propounded to men for their great advantage, and they rejected it at their utmost peril. It seemed good to the Author of this institution to compel no man to it by temporal punishments. When he went about making proselytes he offered violence to no man, only said, *If any man will be my disciple*, *If any man will come after me.* And when his disciples were leaving him he does not set up an Inquisition to torture and punish them for their defection from the faith, only says, *Will ye also go away?*

And in imitation of this blessed Pattern the Christian Church continued to speak and act for several Ages. And this was the language of the holy Fathers, *Lex nova non se vindicat ultore gladio*, the Christian Law doth not avenge it self by the Sword. This was then the style of Councils, *Nemini ad credendum vim inferre*, to offer violence to no man to compel him to the Faith. I proceed in the

II. *Second* place, to shew the *Unjustifiableness of this spirit upon any pretence whatsoeve of zeal for God and Religion.* No case can be put with Circumstances of greater advantge and more likely to justifie this spirit and temper, than the case here in the Text. Those against whom the Disciples would have *called for fire from Heaven*, were Hereticks and Schismaticks from the true Church; they had affronted our Saviour himself in his own person; the honour of God, and of that Religion which he had set up in the World, and of *Jerusalem* which he had appointed for the place of his worship, were all concerned in this case: so that if ever it were warrantable to put on this fierce and furious zeal, here was a case that seem'd to require it: But even in these circumstances our Saviour thinks fit to rebuke and discountenance

this spirit, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* And he gives such a reason as ought in all differences of Religion, how wide soever they be, to deter men from this temper, *For the Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives but to save them*; that is, this Spirit is utterly inconsistent with the great design of Christian Religion, and the end of our Saviour's coming into the world.

And now, what hath the Curch of *Rome* to plead for her cruelty to men for the cause of Religion, which the Disciples might not much better have pleaded for themselves in their case? what hath she to say against those who are the objects of her cruelty and persecution, which would not have held against the *Samaritans?* Does she practise these severities out of a zeal for truth, and for the honour of God, and Christ, and the true Religion? Why, upon these very accounts it was, that the Disciples would have called for *fire from Heaven* to have destroyed the *Samaritans*. Is the Church of *Rome* persuaded that those whom she persecutes are Hereticks and Schismaticks, and that no punishment can be too great for such offenders? So the Disciples were persuaded of the *Samaritans*: and upon much better grounds: Only the Disciples had some excuse in their case, which the Church of *Rome* hath not; and that was Ignorance: And this Apology our Saviour makes for them, *ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of:* They had been bred up in the Jewish Religion, which gave some indulgence to this kind of temper, and they were able to cite a great Example for themselves; besides, they were then but learners and not throughly instructed in the Christian Doctrine. But in the Church of *Rome*, whatever the case of particular persons may be, as to the whole Church and the Governing part of it, this ignorance is wilful and affected, and therefore inexcusable. For the Chistian Religion, which they profess to embrace, does as plainly teach the contrary as it does any other matter whatsoever: And it is not more evident in the New Testament that Christ died for sinners, than that Christians should not kill one another for the misbelief of any Article of *Revealed* Religion; much less for the disbelief of such Articles as are *invented* by men, and imposed as the Doctrines of Christ.

You have heard what kind of *Spirit* it is, which our Saviour here reproves in his Disciples. It was a furious and destructive *Spirit*, contrary to Christian charity and goodness. But yet this may be said in mitigation of their fault, that they themselves offered no violence to their enemies: They left it to God, and no doubt would have been very glad that he would have manifested his severity upon them, by sending down *fire from Heaven* to have consumed them.

But there is a much worse *Spirit* than this in the world, which is not only contrary to *Christianity*, but to the common principles of *Natural Religion*, and even to *Humanity* it self: Which by falshood and perfidiousness, by secret plots and conspiracies, or by open sedition and rebellion, by an Inquisition or Massacre, by deposing and killing Kings, by fire and sword, by the ruine of their Country, and betraying it into the hands of Foreigners; and in a word, by dissolving all the bonds of human Society, and subverting the peace and order of the World, *that is*, by all the wicked ways imaginable both to incite men to promote and advance their Religion. As if all the world were made for *them*, and there were not only no other Christians, but no other Men beside themselves; as *Babylon* of old proudly vaunted, *I am, and there is none besides me:* And as if the God, whom the Christians worship, were not *the God of order but of confusion*; as if He whom we call *the Father of mercies*, were delighted with cruelty, and could

not

not have a more pleasing sacrifice offer'd to him than a Massacre, nor put a greater honour upon his Priests than to make them Judges of an Inquisition, *that is*, the inventors and decreers of torments for men more righteous and innocent than themselves.

Thus to misrepresent God and Religion, is to devest them of all their Majesty and Glory. For if that of *Seneca* be true, that *sine bonitate nulla majestas*, *without Goodness there can be no such thing as Majesty*, then to separate *goodness* and *mercy* from God, *compassion and charity* from Religion, is to make the *two* best things in the world, *God* and *Religion* good for nothing.

How much righter apprehensions had the *Heathen* of the *Divine Nature*, which they looked upon as so benign and beneficial to mankind, that (as *Tully* admirably says) *Dii imortales ad usum hominum fabrefacti penè videantur*, *The nature of the immortal Gods may almost seem to be exactly framed for the benefit and advantage of men.* And as for *Religion*, they always spake of it as the great band of human Society, and the foundation of truth and fidelity, and justice among men. But when Religion once comes to supplant moral Righteousness, and to teach men the absurdest things in the world, *to lye for the truth, and to kill men for God's sake:* when it serves to no other purpose, but to be a bond of conspiracy, to inflame the tempers of men to a greater fierceness, and to set a keener edge upon their spirits, and to make them *ten times more the children of wrath* and cruelty *than they were by nature*, then surely it loses its nature, and ceases to be *Religion:* For let any man say worse of *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, if he can. And, for God's sake, what is Religion good for, but to reform the manners and dispositions of men, to restrain humane nature from violence and cruelty, from falshood and treachery, from Sedition and Rebellion? Better it were there were no *Revealed Religion*, and that humane nature were left to the conduct of its own principles and inclinations, which are much more mild and merciful, much more for the peace and happiness of humane society; than to be acted by a Religion that inspires men with so wild a fury, and prompts them to commit such outrages: and is continually supplanting Government, and undermining the welfare of mankind; in short, such a Religion as teaches men to propagate and advance it self by *means* so evidently contrary to the very *nature* and *end* of all Religion.

And this, if it be well consider'd, will appear to be a very convincing way of reasoning, by shewing the last result and consequence of such principles, and of such a Train of Propositions, to be a most gross and palpable absurdity. *For example*, We will at present admit *Popery* to be the true Religion, and their Doctrines of *extirpating Hereticks*, of the lawfulness of *deposing Kings*, and subverting Government by all the cruel and wicked ways that can be thought of, to be, as in truth they are, the doctrines of this Religion: In this case, I would not trouble my self to debate particulars: but if in the gross, and upon the whole matter it be evident that such a Religion as this is as bad or worse than Infidelity and no Religion, this is conviction enough to a wise man, and as good as a demonstration, that this is not the true Religion, and that it cannot be from God.

How much better teachers of Religion were the old *Heathen Philosophers*? In all whose Books and Writings there is not one Principle to be found of Treachery or Rebellion; nothing that gives the least countenance to an *Association* or a Massacre, to the betraying of ones Native Country, or the cutting of his neighbour's throat for difference in opinion. I speak it with grief and shame, because the credit of our common Christianity is somewhat concerned in it, that *Panætius* and *Antipater* and *Diogenes* the *Stoick*, *Tully*

and

and *Plutarch* and *Seneca* were much honeſter and more Chriſtian *Caſuiſts*, than the *Jeſuits* are, or the generality of the *Caſuiſts* of any other *Order*, that I know of, in the Church of *Rome*. I come now in the

III. *Third* and laſt place, to make ſome *Application* of this Diſcourſe.

1. Let not Religion ſuffer for thoſe faults and miſcarriages which really proceed from the ignorance of Religion, and from the want of it. That under colour and pretence of Religion, very bad things are done, is no argument that Religion it ſelf is not good: Becauſe the beſt things are liable to be perverted and abuſed to very ill purpoſes, nay *the corruption of them is commonly the worſt*; as, they ſay, the richeſt and nobleſt Wines make the ſharpeſt Vinegar. *If the light that is in you*, ſaith our Saviour, *be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?*

2. Let us beware of that *Church* which countenanceth this *unchriſtian Spirit* here condemned by our Saviour; and which teaches us ſuch *Doctrines*, and warrants ſuch *Practices* as are conſonant thereto. You all know, without my ſaying ſo, that I mean the Church of *Rome*; in which are taught ſuch *Doctrines* as theſe, That Hereticks, *that is*, all who differ from them in matters of Faith, are to be extirpated by fire and Sword; which was decreed in the *third* and *fourth Lateran* Councils, where all Chriſtians are ſtrictly charged to endeavour this to the uttermoſt of their power, *Sicut reputari cupiunt & haberi fideles, as they deſire to be eſteemed and accounted Chriſtians.* Next their *Doctrines of depoſing Kings*, and of *abſolving their Subjects from obedience to them*; which were not only univerſally believed, but practiſed by the *Popes* and *Roman* Church for ſeveral Ages. Indeed this Doctrine hath not been at all times alike frankly and openly avowed, but it is undoubtedly theirs; and hath frequently been put in execution, though they have not thought it ſo convenient at all turns to make profeſſion of it. It is a certain kind of Engine, which is to be ſcrew'd up or let down as occaſion ſerves; and is commonly kept like *Goliah*'s Sword in the *Sanctuary* behind the *Ephod*, but yet ſo that the *High-Prieſt* can lend it out upon an extraordinary occaſion.

And for *Practices* conſonant to theſe *Doctrines*, I ſhall go no farther than the horrid and bloody *Deſign* of this *Day*. Such a *Myſtery* of Iniquity, as had been hid from *ages and generations*; Such a Maſter-piece of Villany, *as eye had not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor ever* before *entred into the heart of man*: So prodigiouſly barbarous, both in the ſubſtance and circumſtances of it, as is not to be parallell'd in all the voluminous Records of Time, from the foundation of the World.

Of late years our *Adverſaries* (for ſo they have made themſelves without any provocation of ours) have almoſt had the impudence to deny ſo plain a matter of fact; but I wiſh they have not taken an effectual courſe by freſh Conſpiracies, of equal or greater horror, to confirm the belief of it with a witneſs. But I ſhall not anticipate what will be more proper for another *Day*, but confine my ſelf to the preſent Occaſion.

I will not trouble you with the particular Narrative of this dark Conſpiracy, nor the obſcure manner of its diſcovery, which *Bellarmin* himſelf acknowledges not to have been *without a Miracle*. Let us thank God that it was ſo happily diſcovered and diſappointed, as I hope their preſent deſign will be by the ſame wonderful and merciful providence of God towards a moſt unworthy People. And may the *lameneſs* and *halting* of *Ignatius Loyola*, the Founder of the *Jeſuits*, never depart from that *Order*, but be a *Fate* continually attending all their villanous Plots and Contrivances.

I ſhall

I shall only observe to you, that after the discovery of this Plot the Authors of it were not convinced of the evil, but sorry for the miscarriage of it. Sir *Everard Digby*, whose very original Papers and Letters are now in my hands. after he was in Prison, and knew he must suffer, calls it *the best Cause*; and was extremely troubled to hear it *censured by Catholicks and Priests, contrary to his expectation, for a great sin: Let me tell you*, says he, *what a grief it is, to hear THAT so much condemned, which I did believe would have been otherwise thought of by Catholicks.* And yet he concludes that *Letter* with these words: *In how full joy should I dye, if I could do any thing for the Cause which I love more than my life!* And in another *Letter* he says, he could have said something to have mitigated the *odium* of this business, as to that Point of involving those of his own Religion in the common ruin. *I dare not* (says he) *take that course that I could, to make it appear less odious, for divers were to have been brought out of danger, who now would rather hurt them than otherwise. I do not think there would have been three worth the saving, that should have been lost.* And as to the rest, that were to have been swallowed up in that destruction, he seems not to have the least relenting in his mind about them. All doubts he seems to have look'd upon as temptations, and *intreats* his Friends *to pray for the pardoning of his not sufficient striving against temptations since this business was undertook.*

Good God! that any thing that is called Religion, should so perfectly strip men of all humanity, and transform the mild and gentle race of mankind into such Wolves and Tygers: that ever a pretended zeal for Thy glory should instigate men to dishonour Thee at such a rate! It is believed by many, and not without cause, that the Pope and his Faction are the *Antichrist.* I will say no more than I know in this matter; I am not so sure that it is *he* that is particularly designed in Scripture by that Name, as I am of the main *Articles* of the Christian Faith: But however that be, I challenge *Antichrist* himself, whoever he be, and whenever he comes, to do worse and wickeder things than these.

But I must remember my *Text*, and take heed of imitating that *Spirit* which is there condemned, whilst I am inveighing against it. And in truth it almost looks uncharitably to speak the truth in these matters, and barely to relate what these men have not blush'd to do. I need not, nay I cannot, aggravate these things; they are too horrible in themselves, even when they are express'd in the softest and gentlest words.

I would not be understood to charge every particular person who is, or hath been in the *Roman* Communion, with the guilt of these or the like practices: But I must charge their Doctrines and Principles with them: I must charge the *Heads* of their Church, and the prevalent *teaching* and *governing* part of it, who are usually the contrivers and abetters, the executioners and applauders of these cursed Designs.

I do willingly acknowledge the great Piety and Charity of several persons who have lived and died in that Communion, as *Erasmus*, Father *Paul*, *Thuanus*, and many others; who had in truth more goodness than the Principles of that Religion do either incline men to, or allow of. And yet he that considers how universally almost the *Papists* in *Ireland* were engaged in that *Massacre*, which is still fresh in our memories, will find it very hard to determine how many degrees of innocency and good nature, or of coldness and indifferency in Religion, are necessary to overballance the fury of a blind zeal and a misguided Conscience.

I doubt not but *Papists* are made like other men. Nature hath not generally given them such savage and cruel dispositions, but their Religion hath

hath made them ſo. Whereas true Chriſtianity is not only the beſt, but the beſt-natur'd Inſtitution in the world; and ſo far as any Church is departed from good nature, and become cruel and barbarous, ſo far is it degenerated from Chriſtianity. I am loth to ſay it, and yet I am confident 'tis very true, That many *Papiſts* would have been excellent Perſons and very good Men, if their Religion had not hindered them; if the Doctrines and Principles of their Church had not perverted and ſpoiled their natural Diſpoſitions.

I ſpeak not this to exaſperate *You, worthy Patriots and the great Bulwark of our Religion*, to any *unreaſonable* or *unneceſſary*, much leſs *unchriſtian* Severities againſt them: No, let us not do like them; let us never do any thing for Religion that is contrary to it: But I ſpeak it to awaken your care thus far, That if their *Prieſts* will always be putting theſe pernicious Principles into the minds of the *People*, effectual Proviſion may be made, that it may never be in their Power again to put them in Practice. We have found by Experience, that ever ſince the *Reformation* they have been continually pecking at the Foundations of our Peace and Religion: When God knows we have been ſo far from thirſting after their Blood, that we did not ſo much as deſire their diſquiet but in order to our own neceſſary ſafety, and indeed to theirs.

And God be praiſed for thoſe matchleſs Inſtances which we are able to give of the generous humanity and Chriſtian temper of the *Engliſh Proteſtants*. After Queen *Mary*'s Death, when the Proteſtant Religion was reſtored, Biſhop *Bonner* notwithſtanding all his Cruelties and Butcheries, was permitted quietly to live and dye amongſt us. And after the *Treaſon* of this *Day*, nay at this very time ſince the diſcovery of ſo barbarous a Deſign, and the higheſt Provocation in the World, by the treacherous Murder of one of His *Majeſty*'s Juſtices of the Peace, a very good Man and a moſt excellent Magiſtrate, who had been active in the diſcovery of this Plot; I ſay, after all this, and notwithſtanding the continued and inſupportable inſolence of their Carriage and Behaviour, even upon this occaſion, no Violence, nay not ſo much as any incivility, that I ever heard of, hath been offer'd to any of them. I would to God they would but ſeriouſly conſider this one difference between *our* Religion and *theirs*, and which of them comes neareſt to *the Wiſdom which is from above*, which is *peaceable*, and *gentle*, and *full of mercy*. And I do heartily pray, and have good hopes, that upon this occaſion God will open their eyes ſo far, as to convince a great many among them, that *that* cannot be the true Religion which inſpires men with ſuch barbarous minds.

I have now done, and if I have been tranſported upon this Argument ſomewhat beyond my uſual temper, the Occaſion of this *Day*, and our preſent circumſtances, will, I hope, bear me out. I have expreſſed my ſelf all along with a juſt ſenſe, and with no unjuſt ſeverity, concerning theſe horrid Principles and Practices; but yet with great pity and tenderneſs towards thoſe miſerably ſeduced Souls, who have been deluded by them, and enſnared in them. And I can truly ſay, as the *Roman* Orator did of himſelf upon another occaſion, *Me natura miſericordem, patria ſeverum, crudelem nec patria nec natura eſſe voluit.* My nature inclines me to be tender and compaſſionate; a hearty zeal for our Religion, and concernment for the publick welfare of my Country, may perhaps have made me a little ſevere; but neither my natural diſpoſition, nor the temper of the *Engliſh* Nation, nor the *Genius* of the *Proteſtant*, that is, the true *Chriſtian* Religion, will allow me to be cruel.

For the future, Let us *encourage our selves in the Lord our God*; and *commit* our Cause, and *the keeping of our Souls to Him in well doing*: And, under God, let us leave it to the wisdom and care of His *Majesty*, and His two Houses of Parliament, to make a lasting Provision for the security of our Peace and Religion against all the secret contrivances and open attempts of *these sons of violence*. And let us remember those words of *David*, Psal. 37. 12, 13, 14, 15. *The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth: The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation: Their swords shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.*

And I hope, considering what God hath heretofore done, and hath now begun to do for us, we may take encouragement to our selves against all the Enemies of our Religion, which are confederated against us, in the words of the Prophet, *Isa.* 8. 9, 10. *Associate your selves, O ye People, and ye shall be broken in pieces, and give ear all ye of far Countries: Gird your selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: Gird your selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought: Speak the word and it shall not stand. FOR GOD IS WITH US.*

And now what remains, but to make our most devout and thankful acknowledgments to *Almighty God*, for the invaluable Blessing of our *Reformed* Religion, and for the miraculous *Deliverance* of this *Day*, and for the wonderful *Discovery* of the late horrid and barbarous *Conspiracy* against our *Prince*, our *Peace*, and our *Religion*?

To Him *therefore, our most gracious and merciful God, our* Shield, *and our* Rock, *and our mighty* Deliverer: *Who hath* brought us out of the Land of *Egypt*, and out of the House of Bondage; *and hath set us free from* Popish *Tyranny* and *Superstition*, a Yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.

Who hath, from time to time, delivered us from the bloody and merciless designs of wicked and unreasonable men; *and hath render'd all the plots and contrivances, the mischievous* counsels and devices *of these* worse than Heathens, *of none effect.*

Who did as upon this Day, *rescue our* King *and our* Princes, *our* Nobles *and the* Heads of our Tribes, *the* Governours *of our* Church *and the* Judges *of the* Land, *from that fearful Destruction which was ready to have swallowed them up.*

Who still brings to light the hidden things of darkness, *and hath hitherto preserved our* Religion *and* Civil *Interests to us, in despight of all the malicious and restless attempts of our Adversaries.*

Unto that great God, *who hath done so great things for us, and hath saved us by a mighty* Salvation: *Who* hath delivered us, and doth deliver us, and, we trust, will still deliver us: *be glory and honour, thanksgiving and praise, from generation to generation.* And let all the People say, *Amen.*

A
SERMON
Preach'd at the
First General Meeting
OF THE
Gentlemen & Others
Born within the
COUNTY of YORK.

To my Honoured

FRIENDS & COUNTRY-MEN,

Mr. *Hugh Frankland*, *Leonard Robinson*, *Abrah. Fothergil*, *William Fairfax*, *Thomas Johnson*, *John Hardesty*, Mr. *Gervas Wilcokes*, *George Pickering*, *Edward Duffeild*, *John Topham*, *James Longbotham*, *Nathan. Holroyd.*

Stewards of the *Yorkshire* Feast.

GENTLEMEN,

THis Sermon, *which was first Preached, and is now Published at your desires, I dedicate to your* Names, *to whose Prudence and Care the direction and management of this first* General Meeting *of our Country-men was committed; Heartily wishing that it may be some way serviceable to the healing of our unhappy Differences, and the restoring of Unity and Charity among Christians, especially those of the Protestant Reform'd Religion. I am,*

Gentlemen,

Your affectionate Country-man
and humble Servant,

Jo. Tillotson.

SERMON

SERMON XX.

Preached at the first General Meeting of the Gentlemen, and Others, in and near *LONDON*, Born within the County of *YORK*.

JOHN XIII. 34, 35.

A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.

AS the Christian Religion in general is the best Philosophy and most perfect Institution of Life; containing in it the most entire and compleat System of moral Rules and Precepts that was ever yet extant in the World: so it peculiarly excels in the Doctrine of *Love* and *Charity*; earnestly recommending, strictly enjoining, and vehemently and almost perpetually pressing and inculcating the excellency and necessity of this best of Graces and Virtues; and propounding to us, for our imitation and encouragement, the most lively and heroical Example of kindness and charity that ever was, in the Life and Death of the great Founder of our Religion, *the author and finisher of our faith*, *Jesus* the Son of God.

So that the Gospel, as it hath in all other parts of our Duty, cleared the dimness and obscurity of *natural Light*, and supplied the imperfections of former *Revelations*, so doth it most eminently reign and triumph in this great and blessed virtue of *Charity*; in which all the Philosophy and Religions that had been before in the World, whether *Jewish* or *Pagan*, were so remarkably defective.

With great reason then doth our blessed Saviour call this *a new Commandment*, and assert it to himself as a thing peculiar to his Doctrine and Religion; considering how imperfectly it had been taught and how little it had been practised in the World before; *A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.*

I shall reduce my Discourse upon these *Words* under these six Heads.

First, To enquire in what sense our Saviour calls this Commandment of loving one another *a new Commandment*.

Secondly, To declare to you the nature of this Commandment, by instancing in the chief Acts and Properties of Love.

Thirdly, To consider the degrees and measures of our Charity, with regard to the several Objects about which it is exercised.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Our Obligation to this Duty, not only from our Saviour's Authority, but likewise from our own Nature, and from the Reasonableness and Excellency of the thing commanded.

Fifthly, The great *Example* which is here propounded to our imitation; *as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

Sixthly, and Lastly, The Place and Rank which this Precept holds in the Christian Religion. Our Saviour makes it the proper badge of a *Disciple*, the distinctive mark and character of our Profession; *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.*

I. *In what sense our Saviour calls this Commandment of loving one another a new Commandment*; Not that it is absolutely and altogether *New*, but upon some special accounts. For it is a branch of the ancient and primitive Law of Nature. *Aristotle* truly observes, that upon grounds of natural kindred and likeness *all men are friends*, and kindly dispos'd towards one another. And it is a known Precept of the *Jewish* Religion, to *love our neighbour as our selves.*

In some sense then, it is *no new Commandment*; and so St. *John*, who was most likely to understand our Saviour's meaning in this particular, (all his preaching and writing being almost nothing else but an inculcating of this one Precept) explains this matter, telling us that in several respects it was and it was not *a new Commandment*, 1 Joh. 2. 7, 8. *Brethren, I write no new Commandment unto you, but that which ye had from the beginning, that is*, from ancient times: But then he corrects himself; *Again*, πάλιν, *but yet a new Commandment I write unto you.* So that though it was not absolutely *new*, yet upon divers considerable accounts it was so, and in a peculiar manner proper to the *Evangelical* Institution; and is in so express and particular a manner ascribed to the teaching of the *Holy Ghost*, which was conferr'd upon Christians by the Faith of the Gospel, as if there hardly needed any outward instruction and exhortation to that purpose, 1 *Thess.* 4. 9. *But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye your selves are* θεοδίδακτοι, *divinely taught and inspired to love one another.*

This Commandment then of *loving one another* is by our Lord and Saviour so much enlarged as to the *Object* of it, beyond what either the *Jews* or *Heathens* did understand it to be, extending to all mankind, and even to our greatest enemies; so greatly advanced and heightned as to the *Degree* of it, even to the laying down of our lives for one another; so effectually taught, so mightily encouraged, so very much urged and insisted upon, that it may very well be called a *new Commandment*: for though it was not altogether unknown to mankind before, yet it was never so taught, so encouraged; never was such an illustrious Example given of it, never so much weight and stress laid upon it by any Philosophy or Religion that was before in the World.

II. I shall endeavour to declare to you the *Nature of this Commandment, or the Duty required by it.* And that will best be done, by instancing in the chief *Acts* and *Properties* of Love and Charity. As, *Humanity*, and kindness in all our carriage and behaviour towards one another; for Love smooths the dispositions of men, so that they are not apt to grate upon one another: Next, to *rejoyce* in the good and happiness of one another, and to *grieve* at their evils and sufferings; for Love unites the interests of men so as to make them affected with what happens to another, as if it were in some sort their own case: Then, to contribute as much as in us lies to the happiness of one another, by relieving one another's wants, and redressing their Misfortunes:

Again,

Again, tenderness of their good name and reputation; a proneness to interpret all the words and actions of men to the best sense; patience and forbearance towards one another; and when differences happen, to manage them with all possible calmness and kindness, and to be ready to forgive and to be reconciled to one another; to pray one for another; and if occasion be, at least if the publick good of Christianity require it, to be ready to lay down our lives for our brethren, and to sacrifice our selves for the furtherance of their Salvation.

III. We will consider the *Degrees and measures of our Charity, with regard to the various Objects about which it is exercised.*

And as to the *negative* part of this Duty, it is to be extended equally towards all. We are not to hate or bear ill-will to any man, or to do him any harm or mischief; *Love worketh no evil to his neighbour.* Thus much charity we are to exercise towards all without any exception, without any difference.

And as to the *positive* part of this Duty, we should bear an universal good-will to all men, wishing every man's happiness, and praying for it as heartily as for our own: And if we be sincere herein, we shall be ready upon all occasions to procure and promote the welfare of all men. But the outward acts and testimonies of our Charity neither can be actually extended to all, nor ought to be all alike. We do not know the wants of all, and therefore our knowledge of persons, and of their conditions, doth necessarily limit the effects of our Charity within a certain compass; and of those we do know, we can but relieve a small part for want of ability. Whence it becomes necessary, that we set some rules to our selves for the more discreet ordering of our Charity; such as these; Cases of extremity ought to take place of all other. Obligations of Nature, and nearness of Relation, seem to challenge the next place. Obligations of kindness, and upon the accounts of benefits received, may well lay the next claim. And then the *Houshold of Faith* is to be peculiarly considered. And after these, the merit of the persons, and all circumstances belonging to them, are to be weighed and valued: Those who labour in an honest calling, but are oppress'd with their charge; those who are fallen from a plentiful condition, especially by misfortune and the providence of God, without their own fault; those who have relieved others, and have been eminently charitable and beneficial to mankind; and lastly, those whose visible necessities and infirmities of body or mind, whether by age or by accident, do plead for them: All these do challenge our more especial regard and consideration.

IV. We will consider *our Obligations to this Duty, not only from our Saviour's Authority, but likewise from our own Nature, and from the reasonableness and excellency of the thing commanded.* This is the Commandment of the *Son of God*, who came down from Heaven with full Authority to declare the Will of God to us. And this is peculiarly *His Commandment*, which he urgeth upon his Disciples so earnestly, and so as if he almost required nothing else in comparison of this. *Joh.* 15. 12. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another:* And *Ver.* 17. *These things I command you, that ye love one another.* As if this were the end of all his Precepts, and of his whole Doctrine, to bring us to the practice of this Duty. And so S. *John*, the *loving* and *beloved Disciple*, speaks of it as the great *Message* which the Son of God was to deliver to mankind, 1 *Joh.* 3. 11. *This is the Message which ye have heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another.* And *Ver.* 23. *This is his Commandment,*

mandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us Commandment. And *Chap.* 4. *v.* 21. *This Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also.*

But besides the Authority of our Saviour, we have a precedent obligation to it from our own Nature, and from the Reasonableness and Excellency of the thing it self. The frame of our Nature disposeth us to it, and our inclination to Society, in which there can be no pleasure, no advantage, without mutual love and kindness. And *Equity* also calls for it, for that we our selves wish and expect kindness from others is conviction enough to us that we owe it to others. The fulfilling of this Law is the great perfection of our Natures, the advancement and enlargement of our Souls, the chief ornament and beauty of a great mind. It makes us like to God, the best and most perfect and happiest Being, in that which is the prime excellency and happiness and glory of the Divine Nature.

And the advantages of this temper are unspeakable and innumerable. It freeth our souls from those unruly and troublesome and disquieting Passions which are the great torment of our Spirits; from Anger and Envy, from Malice and Revenge, from Jealousie and Discontent. It makes our minds calm and chearful, and puts our souls into an easie posture, and into good humour, and maintains us in the possession and enjoyment of our selves: It preserves men from many mischiefs and inconveniences, to which enmity and ill-will do perpetually expose them: It is apt to make Friends, and to gain Enemies; and to render every condition either pleasant, or easie, or tolerable to us. So that to love others, is the truest love to our selves, and doth redound to our own unspeakable benefit and advantage in all respects.

It is a very considerable part of our Duty, and almost equall'd by our Saviour with the *first and great Commandment of the Law.* It is highly acceptable to God, most beneficial to others, and very comfortable to our selves. It is the easiest of all Duties, and it makes all others easie; the pleasure of it makes the pains to signifie nothing, and the delightful reflection upon it afterwards is a most ample reward of it. It is a Duty in every man's power to perform, how strait and indigent soever his fortune and condition be. The poorest man may be as charitable as a Prince; he may have as much kindness in his heart, though his hand cannot be so bountiful and munificent. Our Saviour instanceth in the giving of a *cup of cold water,* as a Charity that will be highly accepted and rewarded by God. And one of the most celebrated Charities that ever was, how small was it for the matter of it, and yet how great in regard of the mind that gave it? I mean the Widow's *two mites,* which she *cast into the Treasury:* One could hardly give less, and yet none can give more, for she gave *all that she had.* All these excellencies and advantages of Love and Charity, which I have briefly recounted, are so many Arguments, so many Obligations to the practice of this Duty.

V. We will consider *the great instance and example which is here propounded to our imitation; As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* The Son of God's becoming Man, his whole life, his bitter death and passion, all that he did, and all that he suffered, was one great and continued proof and evidence of his mighty love to mankind. The greatest instance of love among men, and that too but very rare, is for a man *to lay down his life for another, for his Friend;* but the Son of God died for all mankind, and we were all his enemies. And should we not chearfully imitate the example of that

great

great Love and Charity, the effects whereof are so comfortable, so beneficial, so happy to every one of us. Had he not loved us, and died for us, we had certainly perish'd, we had been miserable and undone to all eternity.

And to perpetuate this great Example of Charity, and that it might be always fresh in our memories, the great Sacrament of our Religion was on purpose instituted for the commemoration of this great love of the Son of God, in laying down his life, and shedding his precious blood for the wicked and rebellious race of mankind. But I have not time to enlarge upon this noble Argument as it deserves

VI. The *last* thing to be considered is *the place and rank which this Precept and Duty holds in the Christian Religion.* Our blessed *Saviour* here makes it the proper badge and cognisance of our Profession; *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples if ye love one another.* The different *Sects* among the *Jews* had some peculiar Character to distinguish them from one another The *Scholars* of the several great *Rabbi's* among them had some peculiar Sayings and Opinions, some Customs and Traditions whereby they were severally known: And so likewise the *Disciples* of *John* the *Baptist* were particularly remarkable for their great Austerities. In allusion to these distinctions of *Sects* and *Schools* among the *Jews*, our *Saviour* fixeth upon this mark and character whereby his *Disciples* should be known from the *Disciples* of any other Institution, *A mighty love and affection to one another.*

Other *Sects* were distinguish'd by little Opinions, or by some external Rites and Observances in Religion; but our *Saviour* pitcheth upon that which is the most real and substantial, the most large and extensive, the most useful and beneficial, the most *humane* and the most *divine* quality of which we are capable.

This was his great Commandment to his Disciples, before he left the World: This was the Legacy he left them, and the effect of his last Prayers for them: And for this end among others, he instituted the Sacrament of his blessed Body and Blood, to be a lively remembrance of his great Charity to mankind, and a perpetual bond of Love and Union amongst his Followers.

And the *Apostles* of our Lord and Saviour do upon all occasions recommend this to us, as a principal Duty and Part of our Religion; telling us, That *in Christ Jesus*, that is, in the Christian Religion, nothing will *avail*, no not *Faith* it self, unless it be enlivened and *inspired by Charity*; That *Love is the end of the Commandment*, τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας, the *end of the Evangelical declaration*, the first *Fruit of the Spirit*, the spring and root of all those Graces and Virtues which concern our duty towards one another: That it is the *sum* and abridgement, the accomplishment and *fulfilling of the whole Law:* That without this, whatever we pretend to in Christianity, *we are nothing*, and our *Religion is vain:* That this is the greatest of all Graces and Virtues, greater than *Faith* and *Hope*; and of perpetual use and duration. *Charity never fails.*

And therefore they exhort above all things to endeavour after it, as the Crown of all other Virtues: *Above all things have fervent charity among your selves*, saith St. *Peter*: And St. *Paul*, having enumerated most other Christian Virtues, exhorts us above all to strive after this, *And above all these things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfection.* This St. *John* makes one of the most certain signs of our love to God, and the want of it an undeniable argument of the contrary: *If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he*

 hath

hath not seen? This he declares to be one of the best evidences that we are in a state of Grace and Salvation, *Hereby we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the Brethren.*

So that well might our blessed Saviour chuse this for the badge of his Disciples, and make it the great Precept of the best and most perfect Institution: Other things might have served better for pomp and ostentation, and have more gratified the Curiosity, or Enthusiasm, or Superstition of mankind, but there is no quality in the world which upon a sober and impartial consideration is of a more solid and intrinsick value.

And in the first Ages of Christianity, the Christians were very eminent for this Virtue, and particularly noted for it; *Nobis notam inurit apud quosdam, it is a mark and brand set upon us by some,* saith *Tertullian*; and he tells us that it was proverbially said among the *Heathen, Behold how these Christians love one another. Lucian,* that great scoffer at all Religion, acknowledgeth in behalf of Christians, that this was the great Principle which *their Master* had instill'd into them: And *Julian,* the bitterest enemy that Christianity ever had, could not forbear to propound to the *Heathen* for an example the charity of the *Galileans,* for so by way of reproach he calls the *Christians, who* (says he) *gave up themselves to humanity* and kindness; which he acknowledgeth to have been very much to the advantage and reputation of our Religion: And in the same *Letter* to *Arsacius,* the *Heathen* High Priest of *Galatia,* he gives this memorable Testimony of the *Christians,* that their Charity was not limited and confin'd only to themselves, but extended even to their Enemies; which could not be said either of the *Jews* or *Heathens*: His words are these, *It is a shame, that when the* Jews *suffer none of theirs to beg, and the impious* Galileans *relieve not only their own, but those also of our Religion, that we only should be defective in so necessary a Duty.* By all which it is evident that Love and Charity is not only the great Precept of our *Saviour,* but was in those first and blest Times the general practice of his Disciples, and acknowledged by the *Heathens* as a very peculiar and remarkable quality in them.

The application I shall make of this discourse shall be threefold.

1. With relation to the Church of *Rome.*

2. With regard to our selves who profess the *Protestant* Reform'd Religion.

3. With a more particular respect to the occasion of this Meeting.

I. First, *With relation to the Church of Rome*; Which we cannot chuse but think of, whenever we speak of Charity and loving one another; especially having had so late a Discovery of their affection to us, and so considerable a testimony of the kindness and charity which they designed towards us: such as may justly *make the ears of all that hear it to tingle,* and render *Popery* execrable and infamous, a *frightful* and *hateful* thing to the end of the World.

It is now but too visible how grosly this great Commandment of our Saviour is contradicted, not only by the Practices of those in that Communion from the *Pope* down to the meanest *Friar*; but by the very Doctrines and Principles, by the *Genius* and Spirit of that Religion, which is wholly calculated for cruelty and persecution. Where now is that *mark* of a *Disciple,* so much insisted upon by our *Lord* and *Master,* to be found in that Church? And yet what is the *Christian* Church but the Society and Community of *Christ's Disciples*? Surely in all reason, that which our *Lord* made the distinctive Mark and Character of his *Disciples,* should be the principal mark of a *true Church. Bellarmine* reckons up no less than *fifteen* marks of the true Church

Church, all which the Church of *Rome* arrogates to her ſelf alone: But he wiſely forgot that which is worth all the reſt, and which our Saviour inſiſts upon as the chief of all other, *A ſincere Love and Charity to all Chriſtians:* This he knew would by no means agree to his own Church.

But for all that, it is very reaſonable that Churches as well as particular Chriſtians ſhould be judged by their Charity. The Church of *Rome* would engroſs all Faith to her ſelf: Faith in its utmoſt perfection, to the degree and pitch of infallibility; and they allow no body in the world, beſides themſelves, no though they believe all the Articles of the Apoſtles Creed, to have one grain of true Faith; becauſe they do not believe upon the Authority of their Church, which they pretend to be the only foundation of true Faith. This is a moſt arrogant and vain pretence; but admit it were true, yet in the Judgment of St. *Paul, Though they had all faith, if they have not charity, they are nothing.*

The greateſt wonder of all is this, that they who hate and perſecute Chriſtians moſt, do all this while the moſt confidently of all others pretend to be the Diſciples of Chriſt, and will allow none to be ſo but themſelves. *That* Church which excommunicates all other Chriſtian Churches in the world, and if ſhe could, would extirpate them out of the world, will yet needs aſſume to her ſelf to be the only Chriſtian Church: As if our Saviour had ſaid, *Hereby ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye hate, and excommunicate, and kill one another: What ſhall be done unto thee, thou falſe tongue?* thou empty and impudent pretence of Chriſtianity!

II. Secondly, *With relation to our ſelves, who profeſs the Proteſtant Reformed Religion.* How is this great Precept of our Saviour not only ſhamefully neglected, but plainly violated by us? And that not only by private hatred and ill-will, quarrels and contentions in our civil converſation and intercourſe with one another; but by moſt unchriſtian diviſions and animoſities in that common relation wherein we ſtand to one another, as *Brethren,* as *Chriſtians,* as *Proteſtants.*

Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? And are we not in a more peculiar and eminent manner *brethren,* being *all the Children of God by Faith in Jeſus Chriſt?* Are we not all members of the ſame Body, and partakers of the ſame Spirit, and Heirs of the ſame bleſſed Hopes of eternal life.

So that being Brethren upon ſo many accounts, and by ſo many bonds and endearments all united to one another, and all travelling towards the ſame heavenly Country, *why do we fall out by the way, ſince we be Brethren?* Why do we not as becomes *Brethren,* dwell together in unity? but are ſo apt to quarrel and break out into heats, to crumble into Sects and Parties, to divide and ſeparate from one another upon every ſlight and trifling occaſion.

Give me leave a little more fully to expoſtulate this matter, but very calmly and *in the ſpirit of meekneſs,* and in the name of our dear *Lord* who loved us all at ſuch a rate as to die for us, to recommend to you this *new Commandment* of his, *that ye love one another:* Which is almoſt a *new Commandment* ſtill, and hardly the worſe for wearing; ſo ſeldom is it put on, and ſo little hath it been practiſed among Chriſtians for ſeveral Ages.

Conſider ſeriouſly with your ſelves; ought not the great matters wherein we are agreed, our union in the Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion and in all the neceſſary Articles of that *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints,* in the ſame Sacraments, and in all the ſubſtantial parts of God's worſhip,

and in the great Duties and Vertues of the Christian life, to be of greater force to unite us, than difference in doubtful Opinions, and in little Rites and Circumstances of Worship to divide and break us?

Are not the things about which we differ in their nature *indifferent?* that is, things about which there ought to be no difference among wise men? Are they not at a great distance from the life and essence of Religion, and rather good or bad as they tend to the Peace and Unity of the Church, or are made use of to Schism and Faction, than either necessary or evil in themselves? And shall little scruples weigh so far with us, as by breaking the Peace of the Church about them to endanger our whole Religion? Shall we take one another by *the throat for a hundred pence*, when our common Adversary stands ready to clap upon us an Action of *ten thousand Talents?* Can we in good earnest be contented that rather than the *Surplice* should not be thrown out, *Popery* should come in; and rather than receive the Sacrament in the humble but indifferent posture of *kneeling*, to swallow the Camel of *Transubstantiation*, and *adore* the Elements of Bread and Wine for our God and Saviour? and rather than to submit to a *Set Form* of Prayer, to have the Service of God perform'd in an *unknown Tongue?*

Are we not yet made sensible, *at least in this our day*, by so clear a Demonstration as the Providence of God hath lately given us: and had not He been infinitely merciful to us, might have proved the dearest and most dangerous Experiment that ever was: I say, are we not yet convinced, what mighty advantages our Enemies have made of our Divisions, and what a plentiful harvest they have had among us, during our Differences, and upon occasion of them; and how near their Religion was to have entred in upon us at once, at those wide breaches which we had made for it? And will we still take counsel of our Enemies, and chuse to follow that course to which, of all other, they who hate us and seek our ruin would most certainly advise and direct us? Will we freely offer them that advantage which they would be contented to purchase at any rate?

Let us, after all our sad experience, at last take Warning to keep a stedfast eye upon our chief Enemy, and not suffer our selves to be diverted from the consideration and regard of our greatest danger by the petty provocations of our Friends; so I chuse to call those who dissent from us in lesser matters because I would fain have them so, and they ought in all reason to be so: But however they behave themselves, we ought not much to mind those who only fling dirt at us, whilst we are sure there are others who fly at our throats, and strike at our very hearts.

Let us learn this wisdom of our Enemies, who though they have many great differences among themselves, yet they have made a shift, at this time, to unite together to destroy us: And shall not we do as much to save our selves?

——*fas est & ab hoste doceri.*

It was a Principle among the ancient *Romans*, a brave and wise People, *donare inimicitias Reip.* to give up and sacrifice their private enmities and quarrels to the publick good and the safety of the Commonwealth. And is it not to every considerate man as clear as the Sun at Noon day, that nothing can maintain and support the Protestant Religion amongst us, and *found* our Church *upon a Rock*, so that *when the rain falls, and the winds blow, and the floods beat upon it*, it shall *stand* firm and unshaken: That nothing can be a Bulwark of sufficient force to resist all the arts and attempts of Popery,

pery, but *an establish'd National Religion*, firmly united and compacted in all the parts of it? Is it not plain to every eye, that little *Sects* and *separate Congregations* can never do it? but will be like a Foundation of *sand* to a weighty Building, which whatever shew it may make cannot stand long, because it wants Union at the Foundation, and for that reason must necessarily want strength and firmness.

It is not for private persons to undertake in matters of publick concernment; but I think we have no cause to doubt but the Governours of our Church (notwithstanding all the advantages of Authority, and we think of reason too on our side) are Persons of that Piety and Prudence, that for Peace sake, and in order to a firm Union among Protestants, they would be content, if that would do it, not to insist upon little things; but to yeild them up, whether to the infirmity, or importunity, or perhaps in some very few things, to the plausible exceptions of those who differ from us.

But then surely, on the other side, men ought to bring along with them a peaceable disposition, and a mind ready to comply with the Church in which they were born and baptized, in all reasonable and lawful things, and desirous upon any terms that are tolerable to return to the Communion of it: a mind free from passion and prejudice, from peevish exceptions, and groundless and endless scruples; not apt to insist upon little cavils and objections, to which the very best things, and the greatest and the clearest Truths in the World are and always will be liable: And whatever they have been heretofore, to be *henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive.*

And if we were thus affected on all hands, we might yet be a happy Church and Nation; if we would govern our selves by these Rules, and walk according to them, *peace* would be *upon us, and mercy, and on the* Israel *of God.*

III. *Thirdly*, I shall conclude all with a few words *in relation to the occasion of this present meeting.* I have all this while been recommending to you, from the Authority and Example of our Blessed Saviour, and from the nature and reason of the thing it self, this most excellent Grace and Virtue of Charity, in the most proper Acts and Instances of it: But besides particular Acts of Charity to be exercised upon emergent occasions, there are likewise charitable Customs which are highly commendable, because they are more certain and constant, of a larger extent, and of a longer continuance; As the *Meeting* of the *Sons* of the *Clergy*, which is now form'd and establish'd into a *charitable Corporation:* And the Anniversary *Meetings* of those of the several *Counties* of *England*, who reside, or happen to be in *London*; for *two* of the best and noblest ends that can be, the maintaining of *Friendship*, and the promoting of *Charity*. These, and others of the like kind, I call *charitable Customs*, which of late years have very much obtained in this great and famous City. And it cannot but be a great pleasure and satisfaction to all good men, to see so generous, so humane, so Christian a disposition to prevail and reign so much amongst us.

The strange overflowing of Vice and Wickedness in our Land, and the prodigious increase and impudence of infidelity and impiety, hath of late years boaded very ill to us, and brought terrible Judgments upon this City and Nation, and seems still to threaten us with more and greater: And the greatest comfort I have had under these sad apprehensions of God's displeasure hath been this, that though *bad* men were perhaps never worse

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in any Age, yet the *good*, who I hope are not a few, were never more truly and substantially good: I do verily believe there never were, in any time, greater and more real effects of Charity; not from a blind superstition, and an ignorant zeal, and a mercenary and arrogant and presumptuous principle of Merit, but from a sound knowledge, and a sincere love and obedience to God, or, as the *Apostle* expresseth it, *out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*

And who, that loves God and Religion, can chuse but take great contentment to see so general and forward an inclination in People this way? Which hath been very much cherished of late years by this sort of Meetings: and that to very good purpose and effect, in many charitable contributions disposed in the best and wisest ways: and which likewise hath tended very much to the reconciling of the minds of men, and the allaying of those fierce heats and animosities which have been caused by our Civil confusions and Religious distractions. For there is nothing many times wanting to take away prejudice, and to extinguish hatred and ill-will, but an opportunity for men to see and understand one another; by which they will quickly perceive, that they are not such Monsters as they have been represented one to another at a distance.

We are, I think, one of the last Counties of *England* that have entred into this friendly and charitable kind of Society; Let us make amends for our late setting out by quickning our pace, that so we may overtake and outstrip those who are gone before us: Let not our Charity partake of the coldness of our Climate, but let us endeavour that it may be equal to the extent of our Country; and as we are incomparably the greatest *County* of *England*, let it appear that we are so by the largeness and extent of our Charity.

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without Charity are nothing, send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of Charity, the very bond of Peace, and of all Vertues: Without which whosoever liveth, is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thy only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

Preached at *Whitehall*, *April* 4. 1679.

1 JOHN IV. 1.

Beloved, believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God; becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the World.

THIS caution and counſel was given upon occaſion of the falſe Prophets and Teachers that were riſen up in the beginning of the *Chriſtian* Church, who endeavoured to ſeduce men from the true Doctrine of the Goſpel delivered by the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour. And theſe teaching contrary things, could not both be from God; and therefore St. *John* calls upon Chriſtians to examine the Doctrines and Pretences of thoſe new Teachers, whether they were from God or not. *Believe not every Spirit*; *that is*, not every one that takes upon him to be inſpired and to be a Teacher come from God: *But try the Spirits*; *that is*, examine thoſe that make this pretence, whether it be real or not; and examine the Doctrines which they bring, becauſe there are many Impoſtors abroad in the World.

This is the plain ſenſe of the Words: In which there are contained theſe *four* Propoſitions.

Firſt, *That men may, and often do, falſly pretend to Inſpiration.* And this is the reaſon upon which the Apoſtle grounds this Exhortation: *Becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world*, therefore we ſhould try who are true, and who are falſe.

Secondly, *We are not to believe every one that pretends to be inſpired, and to teach a Divine Doctrine:* This follows upon the former; becauſe men may falſly pretend to Inſpiration, therefore we are not to believe every one that makes this pretence. For any man that hath but confidence enough, and conſcience little enough, may pretend to come from God. And if we admit all pretences of this kind, we lie at the mercy of every crafty and confident man to be led by him into what deluſions he pleaſeth.

Thirdly, *Neither are we to reject all that pretend to come from God.* This is ſufficiently implied in the *Text*; for when the *Apoſtle* ſays *believe not every Spirit*, he ſuppoſeth we are to believe ſome; and when he ſaith *try the Spirits whether they be of God*, he ſuppoſeth ſome to be of God, and that thoſe which are ſo are to be believed. Theſe *three* Obſervations are ſo plain that I need only to name them to make way for the

Fourth, Which I principally deſigned to inſiſt upon from theſe Words. And that is this, *That there is ſome way to diſcern mere pretenders to Inſpiration, from thoſe who are truly and divinely inſpired:* And this is neceſſarily implied in the *Apoſtle's* bidding us to *try the Spirits whether they are of God.* For it

were

were in vain to make any trial, if there be no way to discern between pretended and real Inspiration.

Now the handling of this will give occasion to *two* very material Enquiries and useful to be resolved.

I. *How we may discern between true and counterfeit Doctrines:* those which really are from God, and those which only pretend to be so?

II. *To whom this judgment of discerning doth appertain?*

I. *How we may discern between true and counterfeit Doctrines and Revelations?* for the clearing of this I shall lay down these following Propositions.

1. *That Reason is the faculty whereby Revelations are to be discerned*; or to use the phrase in the *Text*, it is that whereby we are to judge what *Spirits are of God, and what not.* For all Revelation from God supposeth us to be men, and to be endued with Reason; and therefore it does not create new Faculties in us, but propounds new Objects to that Faculty which was in us before. Whatever Doctrines God reveals to men are propounded to their Understandings, and by this Faculty we are to examine all Doctrines which pretend to be from God, and upon examination to judge whether there be reason to receive them as Divine, or to reject them as Impostures.

2. *All supernatural Revelation supposeth the truth of the Principles of Natural Religion.* We must first be assured that there is a God, before we can know that he hath made any Revelation of himself: and we must know that his Words are true, otherwise there were no sufficient reason to believe the Revelations which he makes to us: and we must believe his Authority over us, and that he will reward our obedience to his Laws, and punish our breach of them; otherwise there would neither be sufficient obligation nor encouragement to Obedience. These and many other things are supposed to be true, and naturally known to us, antecedently to all supernatural Revelation; otherwise the Revelations of God would signify nothing to us, nor be of any force with us.

3. *All Reasonings about Divine Revelations must necessarily be governed by the Principles of Natural Religion: that is*, by those apprehensions which men naturally have of the Divine perfections, and by the clear Notions of good and evil which are imprinted upon our Natures. Because we have no other way to judge what is worthy of God, and credible to be revealed by him, and what not, but by the natural Notions which we have of God and of his essential Perfections: which, because we know him to be immutable, we have reason to believe he will never contradict. And by these Principles likewise, we are to interpret what God hath revealed; and when any doubt ariseth concerning the meaning of any divine Revelation (as that of the Holy Scriptures) we are to govern our selves in the interpretation of it by what is most agreeable to those natural Notions which we have of God, and we have all the reason in the World to reject that sense which is contrary thereto. For instance, when God is represented in Scripture as having a humane shape, eyes, ears and hands, the Notions which men naturally have of the Divine Nature and Perfections do sufficiently direct us to interpret these expressions in a sense worthy of God, and agreeable to his Perfection: And therefore it is reasonable to understand them as rather spoken to our capacity, and in a Figure, than to be literally intended. And this will proportionably hold in many other cases.

4. *Nothing*

4. *Nothing ought to be received as a Revelation from God which plainly contradicts the Principles of Natural Religion, or overthrows the certainty of them.* For instance, it were in vain to pretend a Revelation from God, *That there is no God*, because this is a contradiction in terms.

So likewise to pretend a command from God, *That we are to hate and despise him*; because it is not credible that God should require any thing of Reasonable Creatures so unsuitable to their Natures, and to their Obligations to him; Besides that such a Law as this does tacitly involve a contradiction; because upon such a supposition, to despise God would be to obey him; and yet to obey him is certainly to honour him. So that in this case to honour God, and to despise him, would be the same thing, and equal contempts of him. In like manner it would be vain to pretend any Revelation from God, *That there is no life after this, nor rewards and punishments in another World:* because this is contrary to those natural apprehensions which have generally possest mankind, and would take away the main force and sanction of the Divine Laws. The like may be said concerning any pretended Revelation from God, which evidently contradicts those natural Notions which men have of good and evil; as, *That God should command, or allow Sedition and Rebellion, Perfidiousness and Periury*; because the practice of these would be apparently destructive of the peace and happiness of Mankind, and would naturally bring confusion into the World: But *God is not the God of Confusion, but of Order*, which St. *Paul* appeals to as a Principle naturally known. Upon the same account nothing ought to be entertained as a Divine Revelation *which overthrows the certainty of the Principles of natural Religion*; because that would take away the certainty of Divine Revelation it self, which supposeth the truth of those principles. For instance, whoever pretends any Revelation *that brings the Providence of God into question*, does by that very thing make such a Revelation questionable. For if God take no care of the World, have no concernment for humane affairs, why should we believe that he makes any Revelation of his Will to men? And by this Principle *Moses* will have false Prophets to be tried: *Deut.* 13. 1. *If there arise among you a Prophet, and giveth thee a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet:* And he gives the reason of this, *ver.* 5. *Because he hath spoken unto you to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the Land of Egypt.* Here is a case wherein a false Prophet is supposed to work a true Miracle to give credit to his doctrine (which in other cases the Scripture makes the sign of a true Prophet) but yet in this case he is to be rejected as an Impostor: Because the Doctrine he teacheth would draw men off from the worship of the true God who is naturally known, and had manifested himself to the People of *Israel* in so miraculous a manner, by bringing them out of the Land of *Egypt*. So that a Miracle is not enough to give credit to a Prophet who teacheth any thing contrary to that natural Notion which men have, *That there is but one God, who only ought to be worshipped.*

5. *Nothing ought to be received as a Divine Doctrine and Revelation, without good evidence that it is so: that is*, without some Argument sufficient to satisfy a prudent and considerate man. Now (supposing there be nothing in the matter of the Revelation that is evidently contrary to the Principles of Natural Religion, nor to any former Revelation which hath already received a greater and more solemn attestation from God) Miracles are owned by all Mankind to be a sufficient Testimony to any Person, or Doctrine, that are from God. This was the Testimony which God gave to *Moses* to

satisfy the people of *Israel* that he had sent him; *Exod.* 4. 1, 2. *Moses said, They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.* Upon this God endues him with a power of Miracles, to be an evidence to them, *That they may believe that the God of their Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.* And all along in the *Old Testament*, when God sent his Prophets to make a new Revelation, or upon any strange and extraordinary message, he always gave credit to them by some Sign or Wonder which they foretold or wrought. And when he sent his *Son* into the World, he gave Testimony to him by innumerable great and unquestionable Miracles, more and greater than *Moses* and all the Prophets had wrought. And there was great reason for this: because our Saviour came not only to publish a new Religion to the World, but to put an end to that Religion which God had instituted before. And now that the Gospel hath had the confirmation of such Miracles as never were wrought upon any other occasion, no Evidence inferiour to this can in reason controul this Revelation, or give credit to any thing contrary to it. And therefore though the false Prophets and Antichrists, foretold by our Saviour, did really work Miracles, yet they were so inconsiderable in comparison of our Saviour's, that they deserve no credit in opposition to that Revelation which had so clear a Testimony given to it from Heaven by Miracles, besides all other concurring Arguments to confirm it.

6. And *lastly*, *No Argument is sufficient to prove a Doctrine or Revelation to be from God, which is not clearer and stronger than the Difficulties and Objections against it:* Because all Assent is grounded upon Evidence, and the strongest clearest evidence always carries it: But where the evidence is equal on both sides, that can produce nothing but a suspense and doubt in the mind whether the thing be true or not. If *Moses* had not confuted *Pharaoh's* Magicians by working Miracles which they could not work, they might reasonably have disputed it with him who had been the true Prophet: But when he did works plainly above the power of their Magick and the Devil to do, then they submitted and acknowledged that *there was the Finger of God.* So likewise, though a person work a Miracle (which ordinarily is a good evidence that he is sent by God) yet if the Doctrine he brings be plainly contrary to those natural Notions which we have of God, this is a better objection against the truth of this Doctrine than the other is a proof of it; as is plain in the case which *Moses* puts, *Deut.* 13. which I mentioned before.

Upon the same account no man can reasonably believe the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* to be revealed by God; because every man hath as great evidence that Transubstantiation is false, as any man can pretend to have that God hath revealed any such thing. Suppose Transubstantiation to be part of the Christian Doctrine, it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is *Miracles:* But of all Doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a Miracle. For if a Miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which a man hath of the truth of the Miracle, he hath of the falshood of the Doctrine, *that is*, the clear evidence of his senses for both. For that there is a Miracle wrought to prove, *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not bread but the body of Christ*, he hath only the evidence of his senses; and he hath the very same evidence to prove, *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not the body of Christ, but bread.* So that here ariseth a new controversy, whether a man should believe his senses giving testimony against the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, or bearing testimony to the Miracle which is wrought to confirm that Doctrine:

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for there is just the same evidence against the truth of the Doctrine, which there is for the truth of the Miracle. So that the Argument for Transubstantiation, and the Objection against it, do just ballance one another; and where the weights in both Scales are equal, it is impossible that the one should weigh down the other: and consequently Transubstantiation is not to be proved by a Miracle; for that would be, *to prove to a man by something that he sees, that he does not see what he sees.*

And thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and clearly as I could, to give satisfaction to the *first* Enquiry I propounded, *viz.* How we may discern between true and counterfeit Revelations and Doctrines: I proceed now to the

II. *To whom this judgment of discerning does appertain.* Whether to Christians in general, or to some particular Person or Persons, authorized by God to judge for the rest of mankind, by whose judgment all men are concluded and bound up. And this is an enquiry of no small Importance; because it is one of the most fundamental Points in difference between Us and the Church of *Rome*. And however in many particular Controversies, as concerning *Transubstantiation, the Communion in one kind, the service of God in an unknown Tongue,* the business of *Indulgences,* the *Invocation of Saints,* the *Worship of Images,* they are not able to offer any thing that is fit to move a reasonable and considerate man; yet in this Controversie, concerning the Judge of Controversies, they are not destitute of some specious appearance of Reason which deserves to be weighed and considered. Therefore that we may examine this matter to the bottom, I shall do these *three* things.

1. Lay down some Cautions and Limitations whereby we may understand how far the generality of Christians are allowed to judge in matters of Religion.

2. I shall represent the grounds of this Principle.

3. Endeavour to satisfie the main Objections of our Adversaries against it: And likewise to shew, that there is no such reason and necessity for an universal infallible Judge as they pretend.

I. I shall lay down some Cautions and Limitations, by which we may understand how far the generality of Christians are allowed to judge in matters of Religion.

First, Private Persons are only to judge for themselves, and not to impose their Judgment upon others, as if they had any Authority over them. And this is reasonable, because if it were otherwise, a Man would deprive others of that Liberty which he assumes to himself, and which he can claim upon no other account, but because it belongs to others equally with himself.

Secondly, This liberty of judging is not so to be understood as to take away the necessity and use of Guides and Teachers in Religion. Nor can this be denied to be a reasonable limitation; because the knowledge of *Revealed Religion* is not a thing born with us, nor ordinarily supernaturally infused into men; but is to be learned as other things are. And if it be to be learned, there must be some to teach and instruct others: And they that will learn must be modest and humble; and in those things, of which they are no competent Judges, they must give credit to their Teachers, and trust their skill: For instance, every unlearned man is to take it upon the credit of those who are skilful, that the Scriptures are truly and faithfully tran-

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ſtated; and for the underſtanding of obſcure Texts of Scripture, and more difficult Points in Religion, he is to rely upon thoſe, whoſe proper buſineſs and employment it is to apply themſelves to the underſtanding of theſe things. For in theſe caſes every man is not capable of judging himſelf, and therefore he muſt neceſſarily truſt others: And in all other things he ought to be modeſt; and unleſs it be in plain matters, which every man can judge of, he ought rather to diſtruſt himſelf than his Teacher.

And this reſpect may be given to a Teacher without either ſuppoſing him to be infallible, or making an abſolute reſignation of my judgment to him. A man may be a very able Teacher (ſuppoſe of the Mathematicks) and fit to have the reſpect which is due to a Teacher, tho' he be not infallible in thoſe Sciences: and becauſe Infallibility is not neceſſary to ſuch a Teacher, it is neither neceſſary nor convenient that I ſhould abſolutely reſign up my Judgment to him. For though I have reaſon to credit him, within the compaſs of his Art, in things which I do not know, I am not therefore bound to believe him in things plainly contrary to what I and all mankind do certainly know. For example, if upon pretence of his skill in Arithmetick, which I am learning of him, he ſhould tell me, *That twice two do not make four, but five*; though I believed him to be the beſt Mathematician in the World, yet I cannot believe him in this thing: Nor is there reaſon I ſhould; becauſe I did not come to learn this of him, but knew as much of that before as he or any man elſe could tell me. The caſe is the ſame in matters of Religion; in which there are ſome things ſo plain, and lie ſo level to all capacities, that every man is almoſt equally judge of them: As I ſhall have occaſion farther to ſhew by and by.

Thirdly, Neither does this liberty of judging exempt men from a due ſubmiſſion and obedience to their Teachers and Governours. Every man is bound to obey the lawful Commands of his Governours; and what by publick Conſent and Authority is determined and eſtabliſhed, ought not to be gainſaid by private Perſons, but upon very clear evidence of the falſhood or unlawfulneſs of it. And this is every man's duty, for the maintaining of Order, and out of regard to the Peace and Unity of the Church; which is not to be violated upon every ſcruple and frivolous pretence: And when men are perverſe and diſobedient, Authority is Judge, and may reſtrain and puniſh them.

Fourthly, Nor do I ſo far extend this Liberty of judging in Religion, as to think every man fit to diſpute the Controverſies of Religion. A great part of people are ignorant, and of ſo mean capacity as not to be able to judge of the force of a very good Argument, much leſs of the iſſue of a long Diſpute; and ſuch Perſons ought not to engage in diſputes of Religion; but to beg God's direction, and to rely upon their Teachers; and above all to live up to the plain dictates of natural Light, and the clear Commands of God's Word, and this will be their beſt ſecurity. And if the Providence of God hath placed them under ſuch Guides as do ſeduce them into Error, their Ignorance is invincible, and God will not condemn them for it, ſo long as they ſincerely endeavour to do the will of God ſo far as they know it. And this being the caſe of many, eſpecially in the Church of *Rome* where Ignorance is ſo induſtriouſly cheriſhed, I have ſo much charity as to hope well concerning many of them: And ſeeing *that* Church teacheth and enjoins the people to worſhip Images, it is in ſome ſenſe charitably done of them not to let them know the Second Commandment, that they may not be guilty of ſinning againſt ſo plain a Law. Having premiſed theſe Cautions, I proceed in the

II. Place

II. Place, To represent to you *the grounds of this Principle of our Religion*, viz. *That we allow private persons to judge for themselves in matters of Religion.*

First, Because many things in Religion, especially those which are most necessary to be believed and practised, are so plain, that every man of ordinary capacity, after competent instruction in matters of Religion (which is always to be supposed) can as well judge of them for himself, as any man, or company of men in the world can judge for him. Because in these he hath a plain Rule to go by, *Natural Light* and clear *Revelation of Scripture.* And this is no new Principle of the *Protestants*, but most expresly owned by the Ancient *Fathers: Whatever things are necessary, are plain*, saith St. *Chrysostom. All things are plainly contained in Scripture which concern faith and a good life*, saith St. *Austin.* And nothing can be more reasonable, than that those things which are plain to every man should be left to every man's judgment. For every man can judge of what is plain; of evident Truth and Falshood, Virtue and Vice, of Doctrines and Laws plainly delivered in Scripture, if we believe any thing to be so, which is next to madness to deny. I will refer it to no man's Judgment upon earth to determine for me, *Whether there be a God or not? Whether Murder and Perjury be Sins?* Whether it be not plain in Scripture, That *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, That *he became man*, and *died for us*, and *rose again?* So that there is no need of a Judge in these cases. Nor can I possibly believe any man to be so absolutely infallible, as not to call his Infallibility into question, if he determines any thing contrary to what is plain and evident to all mankind. For if he should determine *that there is no God*, or *that he is not to be worshipped*, or *that he will not punish and reward men*, or, which is the case that *Bellarmine* puts, *that Virtue is Vice, and Vice Virtue*; he would hereby take away the very foundation of Religion; and how can I look upon him any longer as a Judge in matters of Religion, when there can be no such thing as Religion if he have judged and determined right?

Secondly, The Scripture plainly allows this liberty to *particular* and *private* Persons to judge for themselves. And for this I need go no farther than my *Text*, which bids men *try the Spirits whether they be of God.* I do not think this is spoken only to the Pope or a General Council, but to Christians in general: for to these the *Apostle* writes. Now if St. *John* had believed that God had constituted an infallible Judge in his Church, to whose Sentence and Determination all Christians are bound to submit, he ought in all reason to have referred Christians to him for the trial of Spirits, and not have left it to every man's private judgment to examine and to determine these things. But it seems St. *Paul* was likewise of the same mind; and tho' he was guided by an infallible Spirit, yet he did not expect that men should blindly submit to his Doctrine: Nay, so far is he from that, that he commends the *Bereans* for that very thing for which I dare say the Church of *Rome* would have check'd them most severely, namely, for *searching the Scriptures* to see *whether those things* which the Apostles deliver'd *were so* or not: This liberty St. *Paul* allowed; and tho' he was inspired by God, yet he treated those whom he taught like men. And indeed, it were a hard case that a necessity of believing Divine Revelations, and rejecting Impostures, should be imposed upon Christians; and yet the liberty of judging, whether a Doctrine be from God or not, should be taken away from them.

Thirdly, Our Adversaries themselves are forced to grant that which in effect is as much as we contend for. For tho' they deny a liberty of judging in *particular Points* of *Religion*, yet they are forced to grant men a liberty

of

of judging upon the *whole*. When they of the Church of *Rome* would perswade a *Jew*, or a *Heathen*, to become a Christian; or a *Heretick*, (as they are pleased to call *us*) to come over to the Communion of their Church, and offer Arguments to induce them thereto; they do by this very thing, whether they will or no, make that man Judge *which is the true Church*, and *the true Religion*. Because it would be ridiculous to perswade a man to turn to their Religion, and to urge him with Reasons to do so, and yet to deny him the use of his own judgment whether their Reasons be sufficient to move them to make such a change. Now, as the *Apostle* reasons in another case, if men be fit to judge for themselves in so great and important a matter as the choice of their Religion, why should they be thought *unworthy to judge in lesser matters?* They tell us indeed that a man may use his judgment in the choice of his Religion; but when he hath once chosen, he is then for ever to resign up his judgment to their Church: But what tolerable reason can any man give, why a man should be fit to judge upon the *whole*, and yet unfit to judge upon *particular* Points? especially if it be considered, that no man can make a discreet judgment of any Religion, before he hath examined the particular Doctrines of it, and made a judgment concerning *them*. Is it credible, that God should give a man judgment in the most fundamental and important matter of all, viz. *To discern the true Religion*, and *the true Church, from the false*; for no other end, but to enable him to chuse once for all to whom he should resign and inslave his judgment for ever? which is just as reasonable as if one should say, That God hath given a man eyes for no other end, but to look out once for all, and to pitch upon a discreet person to lead him about blindfold all the days of his life. I come now to the

III. Thing I propounded, which is, *To Answer the main objection of our Adversaries against this Principle*; and likewise to shew that there is no such Reason and necessity for an universal infallible Judge, as they pretend. Now their great Objection is this, if every man may judge for himself, there will be nothing but confusion in Religion, there will be no end of Controversies: so that an universal infallible Judge is necessary, and without this God had not made sufficient provision for the assurance of mens Faith, and for the Peace and Unity of his Church: Or, as it is expressed in the *Canon Law*, *aliter Dominus non videretur fuisse discretus*, *otherwise our Lord had not seem'd to be discreet*. How plausible soever this Objection may appear, I do not despair but if men will lay aside prejudice, and impartially consider things, to make it abundantly evident, that this ground is not sufficient to found an Infallible Judge upon. And therefore in answer to it, I desire these following particulars may be considered.

First, That this which they say, rather proves what God should have done according to their fancy, than what he hath really and actually done. My *Text* expresly bids Christians to *try the Spirits*, which to any man's sense does imply that they may judge of these matters: But the Church of *Rome* says they may not; because if this liberty were permitted, God had not ordered things wisely, and for the best, for the peace and unity of his Church. But, as the *Apostle* says in another case, *What art thou, O man, that objectest against God?*

Secondly, If this Reasoning be good, we may as well conclude that there is an universal infallible Judge set over the whole World in all *Temporal* matters, to whose Authority all mankind is bound to submit. Because this is as necessary to the peace of the World, as the other is to the peace of the

Church. And men surely are every whit as apt to be obstinate and perverse about matters of Temporal Right, as about matters of Faith. But it is evident in fact and experience that there is no such universal Judge, appointed by God over the whole world, to decide all Cases of temporal Right; and for want of him the world is fain to shift as well as it can. But now a very acute and scholastical man that would argue that God must needs have done whatever he fancies convenient for the World should be done, might by the very same way of Reasoning conclude the necessity of an universal infallible Judge in Civil matters as well as in matters of Religion: And their *aliter Dominus non videretur fuisse discretus*, *otherwise God had not seem'd to be discreet*, is every whit as cogent and as civil, in the one Case as the other.

Thirdly, There is no need of such a Judge, to assure men in matters of Religion; Because men be sufficiently certain without him. I hope it may be certain and clear enough *That there is a God*; and *That his Providence governs the World*: and *That there is another life after this*, though neither Pope nor Council had ever declared any thing about these matters. And for Revealed Doctrines, we may be certain enough of all that is necessary, if it be true which the *Fathers* tell us, *That all things necessary are plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures.*

Fourthly, An infallible Judge, if there were one, is no certain way to end Controversies, and to preserve the unity of the Church; unless it were likewise infallibly certain, *That there is such a Judge*, and *Who he is*. For till men were sure of both these, there would still be a Controversy whether there be an infallible Judge, and who he is. And if it be true which they tell us, *That without an infallible Judge Controversies cannot be ended*, then a Controversy concerning an infallible Judge can never be ended. And there are *two* Controversies actually on foot about an infallible Judge; One, *Whether there be an infallible Judge or not?* which is a Controversy between Us and the Church of *Rome*: and the other, *Who this infallible Judge is?* which is a Controversy among themselves, which could never yet be decided: And yet till it be decided, Infallibility, if they had it, would be of no use to them for the ending of Controversies.

Fifthly, There is no such absolute need, as is pretended, of determining all Controversies in Religion. If men would divest themselves of prejudice and interest, as they ought in matters of Religion, the necessary things of Religion are plain enough, and men would generally agree well enough, about them.: But if men will suffer themselves to be byassed by these, they would not hearken to an infallibe Judge, if there were one; or they would find out some way or other to call his Infallibility into question. And as for doubtful and lesser matters in Religion, charity and mutual forbearance among Christians would make the Church as peaceable and happy as perhaps it was ever design'd to be in this World, without absolute unity in Opinion.

Sixthly and *Lastly*, Whatever may be the inconveniences of mens judging for themselves in Religion, yet taking this Principle with the Cautions I have given, I doubt not to make it appear, that the inconveniences are far the least on that side. The present condition of humane Nature doth not admit of any constitution of things, whether in Religion or Civil matters, which is free from all kind of exception and inconvenience: That is the best state of things which is liable to the least and fewest. If men be modest, and humble, and willing to learn, God has done that which is sufficient for the assurance of our Faith, and for the peace of his Church, without an infallible Judge: and if men will not be so, I cannot tell what would

would be sufficient. I am sure there were Heresies and Schisms in the *Apostles* Times, when Those who governed the Church were certainly guided by an infallible Spirit. God hath appointed Guides and Teachers for us in matters of Religion, and if we will be contented to be instructed by them in those necessary Articles and Duties of Religion, which are plainly contained in Scripture; and to be counselled and directed by them in things that are more doubtful and difficult, I do not see why we might not do well enough without any infallible Judge or Guide.

But still it will be said, Who shall judge what things are plain and what doubtful? The answer to this, in my opinion, is not difficult. For if there be any thing plain in Religion, every man that hath been duly instructed in the Principles of Religion can judge of it, or else it is not plain. But there are some things in Religion so very plain, that no Guide or Judge can in reason claim that authority over men, as to oblige them to believe or do the contrary; no, tho he pretend to Infallibility; no, tho he were an *Apostle*, tho he were an *Angel from Heaven*. St. *Paul* puts the case so high, Gal. 1. 8. *Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than what you have received, let him be accursed:* which plainly supposeth that Christians may and can judge when Doctrines are contrary to the Gospel. What? not believe an *Apostle*, nor *an Angel from heaven*, if he should teach any thing evidently contrary to the plain Doctrine of the Gospel? If he should determine Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue? No; not an Apostle, nor an Angel; because such a Doctrine as this would confound and overturn all things in Religion. And yet *Bellarmin* puts this very Case, and says, if the Pope should so determine, *we were bound to believe him, unless we would sin against Conscience.*

I will conclude this Discourse by putting a very plain and familiar Case; by which it will appear what credit and authority is fit to be given to a Guide and what not. Suppose I came a Stranger into *England*, and landing at *Dover* took a Guide there to conduct me in my way to *York*, which I knew before by the *Map* to lie *North* of *Dover*: having committed my self to him, if he lead me for two or three days together out of any plain Road, and many times over hedge and ditch, I cannot but think it strange, that in a civil and well-inhabited Country there should be no Highways from one part of it to another: Yet thus far I submit to him, tho not without some regret and impatience. But then if after this, for two or three days more he lead me directly *South*, and with my face full upon the Sun at noon-day, and at last bring me back again to *Dover Pere*; and still bids me follow him: Then certainly no Modesty does oblige a man not to dispute with his Guide, and to tell him surely that can be no way because it is *Sea*. Now tho he set never so bold a face upon the matter, and tell me with all the gravity and authority in the world, That it is not *the Sea* but *dry Land* under the *species* and *appearance of Water*; and that whatever my eyes tell me, having once committed my self to his guidance, I must not trust my own senses in the case; it being one of the most dangerous sorts of Infidelity for a man to believe his own eyes rather than his *faithful* and *infallible Guide*: All this moves me not; But I begin to expostulate roundly with him, and to let him understand that if I must not believe what I see, he is like to be of no farther use to me; because I shall not be able, at this rate, to know whether I have a Guide, and whether I follow him or not. In short, I tell him plainly, that when I took him for my Guide, I did not take him to tell me the difference between *North* and *South*, between a *Hedge* and a *Highway*, between *Sea* and *dry Land*; all this I knew before, as well as he or any man

else could tell me; but I took him to conduct and direct me the nearest way to *York*. And therefore after all his impertinent talk, after all his Motives of Credibility to perswade me to believe him, and all his confident *Sayings*, which he gravely calls *Demonstrations*, I stand stifly upon the shore, and leave my learned and reverend Guide to take his own course, and to dispose of himself as he pleaseth; but firmly resolved not to follow him. And is any man to be blamed that breaks with his Guide upon these Terms?

And this is truly the Case, when a man commits himself to the Guidance of any Person or Church: if by vertue of this Authority they will needs perswade me out of my senses, and not to believe *what I see*, but *what they say*; *that Virtue is Vice, and Vice Virtue*, if they declare them to be so: And that because they say they are infallible, I am to receive all their Dictates for Oracles, tho' never so evidently false and absurd in the Judgment of all Mankind: In this case there is no way to be rid of these unreasonable People, but to desire of them, since one kindness deserves another, and all Contradictions are alike easie to be believed, that *they* would be pleased to believe that Infidelity is Faith, and that when I absolutely renounce their Authority, I do yield a most perfect submission and obedience to it.

Upon the whole matter, all the Revelations of God, as well as the Laws of men, go upon this presumption, that men are not stark Fools; but that they will consider their Interest and have some regard to the great concernment of their eternal Salvation. And this is as much to secure men from mistake in matters of Belief, as God hath afforded to keep men from sin in matters of Practice. He hath made no effectual and infallible provision that men shall not sin; and yet it would puzzle any man to give a good Reason, why God should take more care to secure men against Errors in belief, than against sin and wickedness in their Lives.

I shall now only draw *three or four* Inferences from this Discourse which I have made, and so conclude.

1. *That it is every man's Duty, who hath ability and capacity for it, to endeavour to understand the grounds of his Religion.* For to try Doctrines, is to enquire into the grounds and reasons of them; which the better any man understands, the more firmly he will be established in the Truth, and be the more resolute in the day of Trial, and the better able to withstand the arts and assaults of cunning Adversaries, and the fierce storms of Persecution. And on the contrary, that man will soon be moved from his stedfastness who never examined the Grounds and Reasons of his belief. When it comes to the Trial, he that hath but little to say for his Religion will probably neither do nor suffer much for it.

2. *That all Doctrines are vehemently to be suspected which decline Trial*, and are so loth to be brought into the light; which will not endure a fair Examination, but magisterially require an implicit Faith: Whereas Truth is bold and full of courage, and loves to appear openly; and is so secure and confident of her own strength as to offer her self to the severest Trial and Examination. But to deny all liberty of Enquiry and Judgment in matters of Religion, is the greatest injury and disparagement to Truth that can be, and a tacit acknowledgment that she lies under some disadvantage, and that there is less to be said for her than for Error.

I have often wonder'd why the People in the Church of *Rome* do not suspect their Teachers and Guides to have some ill design upon them, when they do so industriously debar them of the means of Knowledge, and are so very loth to let them understand what it is that we have to say against their Religion. For can any thing in the world be more suspicious, than to

perſwade men, to put out their eyes, upon promiſe that they will help them to a much better and more faithful Guide? If any Church, any profeſſion of men, be unwilling their Doctrines ſhould be expoſed to Trial, it is a certain ſign they know ſomething by them that is faulty, and which will not endure the light. This is the account which our Saviour gives us in a like caſe; It was *becauſe mens deeds were evil* that *they loved darkneſs rather than light.* For *every one that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved: But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt that they are wrought in God.*

3. Since Reaſon and Chriſtianity allow this liberty to private perſons to judge for themſelves in matters of Religion, we ſhould uſe this privilege with much modeſty and humility, with great ſubmiſſion and deference to our Spiritual Rulers and Guides, whom God hath appointed in his Church. And there is very great need of this Caution, ſince by experience we find this liberty ſo much abuſed by many to the nouriſhing of Pride and Self-conceit, of Diviſion and Faction; and thoſe who are leaſt able to judge, to be frequently the moſt forward and confident, the moſt peremptory and perverſe: and inſtead of demeaning themſelves with the ſubmiſſion of Learners, to aſſume to themſelves the authority of Judges, even in the moſt doubtful and diſputable matters.

The Tyranny of the *Roman* Church over the Minds and Conſciences of men, is not to be juſtified upon any account; but nothing puts ſo plauſible a colour upon it, as the ill uſe that is too frequently made of this natural Privilege of mens judging for themſelves in a matter of ſo infinite concernment, as that of their eternal happineſs. But then it is to be conſidered, that the proper remedy in this caſe, is not to deprive men of this privilege, but to uſe the beſt means to prevent the abuſe of it. For though the *inconveniences* ariſing from the ill uſe of it may be very great, yet the *miſchief* on the other hand is intolerable. Religion it ſelf is liable to be abuſed to very bad purpoſes, and frequently is ſo; but it is not therefore beſt that there ſhould be no Religion: And yet this Objection, if it be of any force and purſued home, is every whit as ſtrong againſt Religion it ſelf, as againſt mens liberty of judging in matters of Religion. Nay I add farther, that no man can judiciouſly embrace the true Religion, unleſs he be permitted to judge whether that which he embraces be the true Religion or not.

4. When upon due Trial and Examination we are well ſettled and eſtabliſh'd in our Religion, *let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering;* and not be *like Children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, through the ſlight of men, and the cunning craftineſs of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive.* And above all, let us reſolve to live according to the excellent Rules and Precepts of our holy Religion; let us heartily obey that Doctrine which we profeſs to believe. We, who enjoy the *Proteſtant* Religion, have all the means and advantages of underſtanding the Will of God, free liberty and full ſcope of enquiring into it; and informing our ſelves concerning it: We have all the opportunities we can wiſh of coming to the knowledge of our Duty: The Oracles of God lie open to us, and his Law is continually before our eyes; *his word is nigh unto us in our mouths and in our hearts;* (that is, we may read it and meditate upon it) *that we may do it: The key of Knowledge is* put into our hands, ſo that if we do not *enter into the kingdom of Heaven,* it is we our ſelves that ſhut our ſelves out. And where there is nothing to hinder us from the knowledge of our Duty, there certainly nothing can excuſe us from the practice of it. For the end of all knowledge is to direct men in their duty, and effectually to engage them

to the performance of it: The great buſineſs of Religion is, *to make men truly good, and to teach them to live well.* And if Religion have not this effect, it matters not of what Church any man liſts and enters himſelf; for moſt certainly, *A bad man can be ſaved in none.* Tho' a man know the right way to Heaven never ſo well, and be entred into it, yet if he will not walk therein, he ſhall never come thither: Nay, it will be an aggravation of this man's unhappineſs, that he was loſt in the way to Heaven, and periſh'd in the very road to Salvation. But if we will in good earneſt apply our ſelves to the practice of Religion, and the obedience of God's Holy Laws, his Grace will never be wanting to us to ſo good a purpoſe.

I have not time to recommend Religion to you at large, with all its advantages. I will compriſe what I have to ſay in a few words, and mind them at your peril. Let that which is our great concernment be our great care, *To know the truth and to do it, To fear God and keep his Commandments.* Conſidering the Reaſonableneſs and the Reward of Piety and Virtue, nothing can be wiſer; conſidering the mighty aſſiſtance of God's Grace, which he is ready to afford us, and the unſpeakable ſatisfaction and delight which is to be had in the doing of our duty, nothing can be eaſier: Nothing will give us that pleaſure, while we live; nothing can miniſter that true and ſolid comfort to us, when we come to die: There is probably no ſuch way for a man to be happy in this World; to be ſure, there is no way but this to eſcape the intolerable and endleſs miſeries of another World.

Now God grant that we may all know and do in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, for his Mercies ſake in Jeſus Chriſt: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all Honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

KINGSTON upon THAMES,

July 21. 1681.

TO

TO THE

Right Worſhipful, and my Honoured Friend,

Joſeph Reeve, Eſq;

High Sheriff of the

County of SURREY.

SIR,

When I had perform'd the Service which you were pleaſed to call me to in the Preaching of this Sermon, I had no thoughts of making it more publick; And yet in this alſo I was the more eaſily induced to comply with your deſire, becauſe of the ſuitableneſs of the Argument to the Age in which we live; wherein as Men have run into the wildeſt extremities in other things, ſo particularly in the matter of Oaths; ſome making Conſcience of taking any Oaths at all, and too many none at all of breaking them.

To convince the great miſtake of the one extreme, and to check the growing evil and miſchief of the other, is the chief deſign of this Diſcourſe. To which I ſhall be very glad if by God's Bleſſing it may prove any-wiſe ſerviceable. I am,

SIR,

Your very faithful and humble Servant,

Jo. Tillotſon.

SERMON

SERMON XXII.

The Lawfulneſs and Obligation of Oaths.

HEB. VI. 16.

And an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.

THE Neceſſity of Religion to the ſupport of humane Society, in nothing appears more evidently than in this, That the obligation of an Oath, which is ſo neceſſary for the maintenance of peace and juſtice among men, depends wholly upon the ſenſe and belief of a Deity. For no reaſon can be imagined why any man that doth not believe a God, ſhould make the leaſt conſcience of an Oath, which is nothing elſe but a ſolemn appeal to God as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay. So that whoever promotes Atheiſm and Infidelity, doth the moſt deſtructive thing imaginable to humane Society, becauſe he takes away the reverence and obligation of Oaths: And whenever that is generally caſt off, humane Society muſt disband, and all things run into diſorder. The juſt ſenſe whereof made *David* cry out to God with ſo much earneſtneſs, as if the world had been cracking, and the frame of it ready to break in pieces, *Pſal.* 12. *Help, Lord, for the righteous man ceaſeth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men:* Intimating, That when Faith fails from among men, nothing but a particular and immediate interpoſition of the Divine Providence can preſerve the world from falling into confuſion. And our Bleſſed Saviour gives this as a ſign of the end of the world, and the approaching diſſolution of all things, when faith and truth ſhall hardly be found among men, *Luke* 18. 8. *When the Son of man comes, ſhall he find Faith on the earth?* This ſtate of things doth loudly call for his coming to deſtroy the world, which is even ready to diſſolve and fall in pieces of it ſelf when theſe bands and pillars of humane Society do break and fail. And ſurely never in any age was this ſign of the coming of the Son of Man more glaring and terrible than in this degenerate Age wherein we live, when almoſt all ſorts of men ſeem to have broke looſe from all obligations to faith and truth.

And therefore I do not know any Argument more proper and uſeful to be treated of upon this occaſion than of the Nature and Obligation of an *Oath*, which is the utmoſt ſecurity that one man can give to another of the truth of what he ſays; the ſtrongeſt tye of fidelity, the ſureſt ground of judicial proceedings, and the moſt firm and ſacred bond that can be laid upon all that are concerned in the adminiſtration of publick Juſtice; upon *Judge*, and *Jury*, and *Witneſſes*.

And for this reaſon I have pitch'd upon theſe words: In which the Apoſtle declares to us the great uſe and neceſſity of Oaths among men; *an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.* He had ſaid before, that for our greater aſſurance and comfort God hath confirmed his promiſes to us by

by an Oath; condeſcending herein to deal with us after the manner of men, who when they would give credit to a doubtful matter, confirm what they ſay by an Oath. And generally when any doubt or controverſie ariſeth between Parties concerning a matter of fact, one ſide affirming and the other denying, an end is put to this conteſt by an Oath; *An Oath for confirmation being to them an end of all ſtrife: An Oath for confirmation*, εἰς βεβαίωσιν, for the greater aſſurance and eſtabliſhment of a thing: Not that an Oath is always a certain and infallible deciſion of things according to truth and right, but that this is the utmoſt credit that we can give to any thing, and the laſt reſort of truth and confidence among men: After this we can go no farther; for if the Religion of an Oath will not oblige men to ſpeak truth, nothing will. This is the utmoſt ſecurity that men can give, and muſt therefore be the final deciſion of all conteſts; *An Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.*

Now from this aſſertion of the Apoſtle concerning the great uſe and end of Oaths among men, I ſhall take occaſion,

1. To conſider the *nature* of an Oath, and the *kinds* of it.
2. To ſhew the great *uſe* and even *neceſſity* of Oaths, in many caſes.
3. To vindicate the *lawfulneſs* of them where they are neceſſary.
4. To ſhew the ſacred *obligation* of an Oath.

I ſhall be as brief in theſe as the juſt handling of them will bear.

I. For the *nature* of an Oath, and the *kinds* of it. An *Oath is an invocation of God, or an appeal to him as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay.* So that an Oath is a ſacred thing, as being an act of Religion and an invocation of the Name of God: And this, whether the Name of God be expreſly mentioned in it or not. If a man only ſay, *I ſwear*, or *I take my Oath*, that a thing is, or is not, ſo or ſo; or that I will, or will not, do ſuch a thing: Or if a man *anſwer upon his Oath*, being abjured and required ſo to do: Or if a man *ſwear by Heaven, or by Earth*, or by any other thing that hath relation to God; in all theſe caſes a man doth virtually call God to witneſs; and in ſo doing he doth by conſequence invoke him as a Judge and an Avenger, in caſe what he ſwears be not true: And if this be expreſt, the Oath is a formal Imprecation; but whether it be, or not, a curſe upon our ſelves is always implied in caſe of Perjury.

There are *two* ſorts of Oaths, *Aſſertory* and *Promiſſory*. An *aſſertory* Oath is when a man affirms or denies upon Oath a matter of fact, paſt, or preſent: when he ſwears that a thing was, or is ſo, or not ſo. A *promiſſory* Oath is a promiſe confirmed by an Oath, which always reſpects ſomething that is future: And if the promiſe be made directly and immediately to *God*, then it is called a *Vow*; if to *men*, an *Oath*. I proceed to the

II. Thing, which is to ſhew the great *uſe* and even *neceſſity* of Oaths, in many caſes: which is ſo great, that humane Society can very hardly, if at all, ſubſiſt long without them. Government would many times be very inſecure, and for the faithful diſcharge of Offices of great truſt, in which the welfare of the publick is nearly concerned, it is not poſſible to find any ſecurity equal to that of an Oath; becauſe the obligation of that reacheth to the moſt ſecret and hidden practices of men, and takes hold of them in many caſes where the penalty of no humane Law can have any awe or force upon them: and eſpecially, it is (as the *Civil Law* expreſſeth it) *maximum expediendarum litium remedium*, the beſt means of ending controverſies.

And

And where mens estates or lives are concerned, no evidence but what is assur'd by an Oath will be thought sufficient to decide the matter, so as to give full and general satisfaction to mankind. For in matters of so great concernment, when men have all the assurance that can be had, and not till then, they are contented to sit down and rest satisfied with it. And among all Nations an Oath hath always been thought the only peremptory and satisfactory way of deciding such controversies.

III. The *third* thing I proposed was to vindicate the *lawfulness* of Oaths, where they are necessary. And it is a very strong inducement to believe the lawfulness of them, that the unavoidable condition of humane affairs hath made them so necessary. The Apostle takes it for granted that an Oath is not only of great use in humane affairs, but in many cases of great necessity, to confirm a doubtful thing, and to put an end to controversies which cannot otherwise be decided to the satisfaction of the Parties contending; *An Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* And indeed it is hardly imaginable that God should not have left that lawful, which is so evidently necessary to the peace and security of mankind.

But because there is a *Sect*, sprung up in our memory, which hath called in question the lawfulness of all Oaths, to the great mischief and disturbance of humane Society, I shall endeavour to search this matter to the bottom, and to manifest how unreasonable and groundless this Opinion is. And to this end, I shall

First, Prove the lawfulness of Oaths from the authority of this Text, and from the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it.

Secondly, I shall shew the weakness and insufficiency of the grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from Reason, or from Scripture, which last they principally rely upon; and if it could be made out from thence, would determine the case.

1. I shall prove the lawfulness of Oaths from the Authority of this Text, and the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it. Because the Apostle doth not only speak of the use of Oaths among men without any manner of censure and reproof, but as a commendable custom and practice, and in many cases necessary for the confirmation of doubtful matters, and in order to the final decision of Controversies and Differences among men. For,

First, He speaks of it as the general practice of Mankind, to confirm things by an Oath in order to the ending of differences. And indeed there is nothing that hath more universally obtained in all Ages and Nations of the world; than which there is not a more certain indication that a thing is agreeable to the Law of Nature and the best Reason of Mankind. And that this was no degenerate practice of Mankind, like that of Idolatry, is from hence evident; that when God separated a People to himself, it was practised among them, by the holy Patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; and was afterwards not only allowed, but in many Cases commanded by the Law of *Moses*; which had it been a thing evil in it self and forbidden by the Law of Nature, would not have been done.

Secondly, Another undeniable Argument from the Text of the lawfulness of Oaths is, that God himself, in condescention to the custom of men who use to confirm and give credit to what they say by an Oath, is represented by the Apostle as confirming his promise to us by an Oath, *Ver.* 13. *When God made the promise to Abraham, because he could swear by none greater, he swears by himself. For men verily swear by the greater; and an Oath for confirma-*

tion is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an Oath: which he certainly would not have done, had an Oath been unlawful in it self. For that had been to comply with men in an evil practice, and by his own example to give countenance to it in the highest manner: But though God condescend to represent himself to us after the manner of men, he never does it in any thing that is in its own nature evil and sinful.

Thirdly, From the great Usefulness of Oaths in humane affairs, to give credit and confirmation to our word, and to put an end to Contestations. Now that which serves to such excellent purposes, and is so convenient for humane society, and for mutual security and confidence among men, ought not easily to be presumed unlawful, till it be plainly proved to be so. And if we consider the nature of an Oath, and every thing belonging to it, there is nothing that hath the least appearance of evil in it. There is surely no evil in it, as it is an act of Religion; nor as it is an appeal to God as a witness and avenger in case we swear falsly; nor as it is a confirmation of a doubtful matter; nor as it puts an end to strife and controversie. And these are all the essential ingredients of an Oath, and the ends of it; and they are all so good, that they rather commend it, than give the least colour of ground to condemn it. I proceed in the

Second place, to shew the weakness and insufficiency of the grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from *Reason* or from *Scripture*.

First, From *Reason*. They say the necessity of an Oath is occasioned by the want of truth and fidelity among men. And that every man ought to demean himself with that faithfulness and integrity as may give credit and confirmation to his word; and then Oaths will be needless. This pretence will be fully answered if we consider these *two* things.

1. That in matters of great importance no other obligation, besides that of an Oath, hath been thought sufficient amongst the best and wisest of men to assert their fidelity to one another. *Even the best men* (to use the words of a great Author) *have not trusted the best men without it*. As we see in very remarkable instances, where Oaths have passed between those who might be thought to have the greatest confidence in one another: As between *Abraham* and his old faithful servant *Eliezer*, concerning the choice of a wife for his Son: Between Father and Son, *Jacob* and *Joseph*, concerning the burial of his Father in the Land of *Canaan*: Between two of the dearest and most intimate Friends, *David* and *Jonathan*, to assure their Friendship to one another; and it had its effect long after *Jonathan*'s death, in the saving of *Mephibosheth*, when reason of State and the security of his Throne seem'd to move *David* strongly to the contrary; for it is expresly said 2 *Sam*. 21. 7. that *David* spared *Mephibosheth*, *Jonathan*'s *Son*, *because of the oath of the Lord that was between them*; implying, that had it not been for his Oath, other considerations might probably have prevail'd with him to have permitted him to have been cut off with the rest of *Saul*'s Children.

2. This Reason, which is alledged against Oaths among men, is much stronger against God's confirming his promises to us by an Oath. For he who is truth it self is surely of all other most to be credited upon his bare word, and his oath needless to give confirmation to it; and yet he condescends to add his oath to his word; and therefore that reason is evidently of no force.

Secondly, From *Scripture*. Our Saviour seems altogether to forbid swearing in any case, *Matth*. 5. 33, 34. *Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thy self: but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither*

neither by heaven, &c. But let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. And this Law St. *James* recites, *chap. 5. vers. 12.* as that which Christians ought to have a very particular and principal regard to; *above all things my brethren swear not:* And he makes the breach of this Law a damning sin, *lest ye fall into condemnation.* But the Authority of our Saviour alone is sufficient, and therefore I shall only consider that Text.

And, because here lies the main strength of this opinion of the unlawfulness of Oaths, it is very fit that this Text be fully consider'd; and that it be made very evident, that it was not our Saviour's meaning by this prohibition wholly to forbid the use of Oaths.

But before I enter upon this matter, I will readily grant, that there is scarce any Error whatsoever that hath a more plausible colour from Scripture, than this; which makes the case of those who are seduced into it the more pityable: But then it ought to be consider'd, how much this Doctrine of the unlawfulness of Oaths reflects upon the Christian Religion: since it is so evidently prejudicial both to humane Society in general, and particularly to those persons that entertain it: neither of which ought rashly to be supposed and taken for granted, concerning any Law delivered by our Saviour: Because upon these terms it will be very hard for us to vindicate the divine wisdom of our Saviour's Doctrine, and the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion. Of the inconvenience of this Doctrine to humane Society, I have spoken already. But besides this, it is very prejudicial to them that hold it. It renders them suspected to Government, and in many cases incapable of the common benefits of Justice and other privileges of humane Society, and exposeth them to great Penalties as the constitution of all Laws and Governments at present is, and it is not easie to imagine how they should be otherwise. And which is very considerable in this matter, it sets those who refuse Oaths upon very unequal terms with the rest of Mankind, if where the estates and lives of men are equally concern'd, their bare testimonies shall be admitted without an Oath, and others shall be obliged to speak upon Oath: Nothing being more certain in experience, than that many men will lie for their interest when they will not be perjured, God having planted in the natural Consciences of men a secret dread of perjury above most other sins. And this inconvenience is so great, as to render those who refuse oaths in all cases almost intolerable to humane Society. I speak not this either to bring them into trouble, or to perswade them to measure truth by their interest: but on the other hand I must needs say, that it is no Argument either of a wise or good man to take up any opinion, especially such a one as is greatly to his prejudice, upon slight grounds. And this very consideration that it is so much to their inconvenience, may justly move them to be very careful in the examination of it.

This being premis'd, I come now to explain this Prohibition of our Saviour; and to this purpose, I desire these *three* things may be well consider'd.

First, That several circumstances of these words of our Saviour do manifestly shew that they ought to be interpreted in a limited sense, as only forbidding swearing in common conversation; *needless* and *heedless* oaths (as one expresseth it) and in general all voluntary swearing unless upon some great and weighty cause, in which the glory of God and the good of the souls of men is concerned. For that in such cases a voluntary Oath may be lawful, I am induced to believe from the example of St. *Paul*, who

uſeth it more than once upon ſuch occaſions; of which I ſhall hereafter give particular Inſtances.

And this was the ſenſe of wiſe men among the *Heathen*, that men ſhould not ſwear but upon neceſſity and great occaſion. Thus *Euſebius*, the Philoſopher in *Stobæus*, counſels men. *Some* (ſays he) *adviſe men to be careful to ſwear the truth; but I adviſe principally that men do not eaſily ſwear at all*, that is, not upon any ſlight but only upon weighty occaſions; To the ſame purpoſe *Epictetus*, *Shun oaths wholly, if it be poſſible; if not, however as much as thou canſt*: And ſo likewiſe *Simplicius* in his *Comment* upon him, *We ought wholly to ſhun ſwearing, except upon occaſions of great neceſſity.* And *Quintilian* among the *Romans*, *In totum jurare, niſi ubi neceſſe eſt, gravi viro parum convenit*; *To ſwear at all, except where it is neceſſary, does not well ſuit with a wiſe man.*

And, that this prohibition of our Saviour's ought to be underſtood of Oaths in ordinary converſation, appears from the oppoſition which our Saviour makes, *Swear not at all; but let your communication be yea, yea*; That is, in your ordinary commerce and affairs do not interpoſe oaths, but ſay and do. And this is very much confirmed, in that our Saviour does not under this general Prohibition, inſtance in ſuch oaths as are expreſly by the name of God: The reaſon whereof is this; The *Jews* thought it unlawful in ordinary communication to ſwear expreſly by the name of God, but lawful to ſwear by the Creatures, as by *Heaven* and *Earth*, &c. So that our Saviour's meaning is as if he had ſaid, You think you may ſwear in common converſation provided you do not ſwear by the name of God; but I ſay unto you, let your communication be without oaths of any kind: you ſhall not ſo much as ſwear by *heaven* or by *earth*, becauſe God is virtually invoked in every oath. And unleſs we ſuppoſe this to be our Saviour's meaning, I do not ſee what good Reaſon can be given why our Saviour ſhould only forbid them to ſwear by the Creatures, and not much rather by the Name of God; ſuch oaths being ſurely of all others moſt to be avoided, as being the moſt direct abuſe and profanation of the Name of God.

Secondly, It is very conſiderable to the explaining of this Prohibition, that there are the like general expreſſions in other *Jewiſh* Authors concerning this very matter, which yet muſt of neceſſity be thus limited. *Maimonides*, from the ancient *Rabbies*, gives this Rule, that *it is beſt not to ſwear at all.* And *Philo* uſeth almoſt the ſame words. And *Rabbi Jonathan* comes very near our Saviour's expreſſion, when he ſays, *The juſt man will not ſwear at all; not ſo much as by the common Names of God, nor by his Attributes, nor by his Works, as by Heaven, or the Angels, or the Law.* Now it is not imaginable, that theſe learned *Jews* ſhould condemn Oaths in all caſes, when the Law of *Moſes* did in many caſes expreſly require them. And therefore they are to be underſtood of voluntary oaths in ordinary converſation. And that the *Jews* meant this by not ſwearing at all, ſeems to be very plain from a paſſage in *Joſephus*, who ſays that the Sect of the *Eſſenes* forbad their Diſciples to ſwear at all; and yet he tells us at the ſame time, that they who were admitted into that Sect took an oath to obſerve the Laws and Rules of it. So that they who forbad to ſwear at all, allowed of Oaths impoſed by the Authority of Superiors.

Thirdly, which will peremptorily decide this matter, This Prohibition of our Saviour's cannot be underſtood to forbid all Oaths, without a plain contradiction to the undoubted practice of the primitive Chriſtians, and of the Apoſtles, and even of our Lord himſelf. *Origen* and *Tertullian* tell us, that the Chriſtians refuſed to ſwear by the Emperor's *Genius*; not becauſe it was an Oath, but becauſe they thought it to be Idolatrous: But the ſame *Tertullian*

tullian says, that the Christians were willing to swear *per salutem Imperatoris, by the health and safety of the Emperour. Athanasius* being accused to *Constantius* purged himself by oath, and desired that his Accuser might be put to his Oath *sub attestatione veritatis, by calling the truth to witness*; by which form (says he) *we Christians are wont to swear.* But which is more than this, S. *Paul*, upon weighty occasions, does several times in his *Epistles* call God to witness for the truth of what he says; which is the very formality of an Oath. *God is my witness*, Rom. 1. 9. *As God is true, our word was not yea and nay*, 2 Cor. 1. 18. and *v.* 23. *I call God for a record upon my soul. Before God I lye not*, Gal. 1. 20. *God is my record*, Phil. 1. 8. *God is my witness*, 1 *Thes.* 2. 5. These are all unquestionable Oaths; which we cannot imagine St. *Paul* would have used, had they been directly contrary to our Saviour's Law. And whereas some defend this upon account of his extraordinary Inspiration, I cannot possibly see how this mends the matter. For certainly it is very inconvenient to say, that they who were to teach the Precepts of Christ to others, did themselves break them by inspiration.

But I go yet farther, and shall urge an example beyond all exception. Our Saviour himself (who surely would not be the first example of breaking his own Laws) did not refuse to answer upon Oath, being called thereto at his Trial. So we find *Matt.* 26. 63. *The high Priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be Christ the Son of God*; that is, he required him to answer this question upon Oath. For among the *Jews*, the form of giving an Oath to witnesses and others was not by tendring a formal Oath to them, as the custom is among us, but by adjuring them, that is, requiring them to answer upon Oath: As is plain from *Levit.* 5. 1. *If a man hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness whether he hath seen or known of such a thing, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. If ye have heard the voice of swearing*, that is, if being adjured or demanded to answer upon Oath concerning what he hath seen or heard, he do not utter the truth, he is perjured. Now to this adjuration of the high Priest our Saviour answered, *Thou hast said*; which words are not an avoiding to answer (as some have thought) but a direct answer, as if he had said, *It is as thou sayest, it is even so, I am the Son of God.* For upon this answer the high Priest said, *He hath spoken blasphemy.* But to put the matter beyond all doubt, St. *Mark* tells us, *Mark* 14. 61. that he being asked by the high Priest, *Art thou the Christ the Son of the Blessed? He answered, I am.* So that unless we will interpret our Saviour's Doctrine contrary to his own practice, we cannot understand him to forbid all Oaths, and consequently they are not unlawful.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might give clear satisfaction in this matter to those that are willing to receive it.

As for the *Ceremonies* in use among us in the taking of Oaths, it is no just Exception against them, that they are not found in Scripture. For this was always matter of Liberty; and several Nations have used several Rites and Ceremonies in their Oaths. It was the custom of the *Grecians*, to swear laying their hands upon the Altar, *quod sanctissimum jusjurandum est habitum*, (saith *A. Gellius*) *which was looked upon as the most sacred form of swearing.* The *Romans* were wont *Jovem Lapidem jurare*; that is, he that swore by *Jupiter* held a Flint-stone in his hand, and flung it violently from him with these words, *Si sciens fallo ita me Jupiter bonis omnibus ejiciat, ut ego hunc Lapidem: If I knowingly falsify, God so throw me out of all my possessions as I do this Stone.*

In *Scripture* there are *two* Ceremonies mentioned of Swearing: *One*, of *putting the hand under the Thigh* of him to whom the Oath was *made.* Thus

Eliezer

Eliezer swore to *Abraham*, *Gen.* 24. and *Joseph* to *Jacob*, *Gen* [illegible]. The *other* was *by lifting up the hand to heaven:* Thus *Abraham* expresseth the manner of an Oath, *Gen.* 14. 22. *I have lift up my hand to the most high God.* And thus God condescending to the manner of men expresseth himself, *Deut.* 32. 40. *If I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear.* In allusion to this Custom the *Psalmist* describes the Perjured person, *Psal.* 144. 8. *Whose mouth speaketh vanity; and whose right hand is a right hand of falshood.* And there is not the least intimation in Scripture that either of these Ceremonies were prescribed and appointed by God, but voluntarily instituted and taken up by men. And thus among us the Ceremony of Swearing is *by laying the hand on the holy Gospel*, and *kissing the Book*; which is both very solemn and significant. And this is the reason why this solemn kind of Oath is called a *corporal* Oath, and was anciently so called; because the sign or ceremony of it is performed by some part of the *Body*. And this Solemnity is an aggravation of the Perjury, because it makes it both more deliberate, and more scandalous.

I shall speak but briefly to the

IV. And last particular, *viz.* the sacred *obligation* of an Oath: because it is a solemn appeal to God as a witness of the truth of what we say: To God, I say, from whose piercing and all-seeing eye, from whose perfect and infinite knowledge, nothing is or can be hid; So that there is not a thought in our heart but he sees it, nor a word in our tongue but he discerns the truth or falshood of it. Whenever we swear, we appeal to his Knowledge, and refer our selves to his just judgment who is the powerful Patron and Protector of Right, and the almighty Judge and Avenger of all falshood and unrighteousness. So that it is not possible for men to lay a more sacred and solemn obligation upon their Consciences, than by the Religion of an Oath. *Moses* very well expresseth it, by *binding our souls with a bond*, Numb. 30. 2. *If a man swear an oath, to bind his soul with a bond*; intimating that he that swears lays the strongest obligation upon himself, and puts his Soul in pawn for the truth of what he says. And this obligation no man can violate, but at the utmost peril of the judgment and vengeance of God. For every Oath implies a Curse upon our selves in case of Perjury, as *Plutarch* observes. And this was always the sense of Mankind concerning the obligation of Oaths. *Nullum vinculum ad astringendam fidem majores nostri jurejurando arctius esse voluerunt*, saith *Tully: Our forefathers had no stricter bond whereby to oblige the faith of men to one another, than that of an Oath.* To the same purpose is that in the *Comedian*, *Aliud si scirem, qui firmare meam apud vos possem fidem, sanctius quam jusjurandum, id pollicerer tibi. If I knew any thing more sacred than an Oath, whereby to confirm to you the truth of what I say, I would make use of it.*

I will crave your patience a little longer, whilst by way of inference from this Discourse, I represent to you the great Sin of *Swearing in common conversation*, upon trivial and needless occasions, and the hainousness of the sin of *Perjury*.

1. *First*, The great sin of *Swearing*, upon trivial and needless occasions, in common conversation. Because an Oath is a solemn thing, and reserved for great occasions, to give confirmation to our word in some weighty matter, and to put an end to controversies which cannot otherwise be peremptorily and satisfactorily decided. And therefore to use Oaths upon light occasions argues great profaneness and irreverence of Almighty God. So *Ulpian* the great *Roman* Lawyer observes, *Nonnullus esse faciles ad jurandum contemptu Religionis, that mens proneness to swearing comes from a contempt of Religion*; than which nothing disposeth men more to Atheism and Infidelity.

lity. Befides that it doth many times furprife men unawares into Perjury: And how can it be otherwife, when men ufe to interlard all their carelefs talk with Oaths, but that they muft often be Perjur'd? And which is worfe, it prepares men for deliberate Perjury; For with thofe who are accuftomed to fwear upon light occafions, an Oath will go off with them more roundly about weightier matters. *From a common cuftom of Swearing* (faith *Hierocles*) *men eafily flide into perjury: Therefore* (fays he) *if thou wouldft not be perjured, do not ufe to fwear.* And this perhaps is the meaning of St. *James*, when he cautions Chriftians fo vehemently againft common fwearing, ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὑπόκρισιν πέσητε, (for fo fome of the beft ancient Copies read it) *left ye fall into hypocrifie*, that is, left ye lie and be perjured, by ufing your felves to rafh and inconfiderate fwearing.

And men expofe themfelves to this danger to no purpofe; Oaths in common difcourfe being fo far from confirming a man's word, that with wife men they much weaken it: For common fwearing (if it have any ferious meaning at all) argues in a man a perpetual diftruft of his own reputation, and is an acknowledgment that he thinks his bare word not to be worthy of credit. And it is fo far from adorning and filling a man's difcourfe, that it makes it look fwoln and bloated, and more bold and bluftring, than becomes perfons of gentle and good breeding. Befides that it is a great incivility, becaufe it highly offends and grates upon all fober and confiderate perfons; who cannot be prefumed with any manner of eafe and patience to hear God affronted, and his great and glorious Name fo irreverently toft upon every flight occafion.

And it is no excufe to men that many times they do it ignorantly, and not obferving and knowing what they do. For certainly it is no extenuation of a fault, that a man hath got the habit of it fo perfect that he commits it when he does not think of it. Which confideration fhould make men oppofe the beginnings of this vice, left it grow into a habit very hard to be left. *Nemo novit, nifi qui expertus eft, quam fit difficile confuetudinem jurandi extinguere*, faith St. *Auftin*; *No man knows, but he that hath tried, how hard it is to get rid of this cuftom of Swearing:* But yet it is certain men may do it, by refolution and great care of themfelves: For he that can chufe whether he will fpeak or not, can chufe whether he will fwear or not when he fpeaks. *Major confuetudo majorem intentionem flagitat; The more inveterate a cuftom is, the greater care fhould be ufed to break our felves of it.*

In fhort, This practice is fo contrary to fo plain a Precept of our Saviour, and by the breach whereof we incur fo great a danger (as S. *James* affures us) that it muft be a great charity that can find out a way to reconcile a common cuftom of fwearing with a ferious belief of the *Chriftian Religion:* Which I would to God thofe who are concerned would ferioufly lay to heart; efpecially, fince this Sin, of all others, hath the leaft of Temptation to it. Profit or Pleafure there is none in it, nor any thing in mens natural tempers to incite them to it. For tho fome men pour out Oaths fo freely as if they came naturally from them, yet furely no man is born of a fwearing conftitution.

All that can be pretended for it, is Cuftom and Fafhion: But to fhew that this is no Excufe, it is very obfervable that it is particularly in the matter of Oaths and Perjury that the Holy Ghoft gives that caution, *Thou fhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*

And laftly, it deferves to be confidered, that this fin is fo much the greater becaufe of the frequent returns of it in thofe that are accuftomed to it. So that although it were but fmall in it felf (as it is not) yet the frequent practice of this fin would quickly mount it up to a great fcore.

2. *Secondly,*

2. *Secondly*, To repreſent the hainouſneſs of the ſin of *Perjury*. But before I aggravate this Crime, it is fit to let men know how many ways they may be guilty of it.

1. When a man aſſerts upon Oath what he knows to be otherwiſe: Or promiſeth what he does not intend to perform. In both theſe caſes the very act of ſwearing is Perjury. And ſo likewiſe when a man promiſeth upon oath to do that which it is unlawful for him to do becauſe this Oath is contrary to a former obligation.

2*dly*. When a man is uncertain whether what he ſwear to, be true. This likewiſe is Perjury, in the act; though not of the ſame degree of guilt with the former, becauſe it is not ſo fully and directly againſt his knowledge and conſcience. For men ought to be certain of the truth of what they aſſert upon Oath, and not to ſwear at a venture. And therefore no man ought poſitively to ſwear to the truth of any thing but what he himſelf hath ſeen or heard: This being the higheſt aſſurance men are capable of in this World. In like manner, he is guilty of perjury in the ſame degree who promiſeth upon Oath what he is not morally and reaſonably certain he ſhall be able to perform.

3*dly*. They are likewiſe guilty of Perjury, who do not uſe great plainneſs and ſimplicity in Oaths; but anſwer *equivocally* and doubtfully, or with reſervation of ſomething in their minds, thinking thereby to ſalve the truth of what they ſay. And we all know who they are that make uſe of theſe arts, and maintain them to be lawful; to the infinite ſcandal of the Chriſtian Religion and prejudice of humane Society, by doing what in them lies to deſtroy all Faith and mutual confidence among men. For what can be a greater affront to God, than to uſe his Name to deceive men? And what can more directly overthrow the great end and uſe of Oaths, which are *for confirmation*, and to *put an end to ſtrife*? Whereas by theſe arts the thing is left in the ſame uncertainty it was before, and there is no deciſion of it. For there is hardly any form of words can be deviſed ſo plain, as not to be liable to Equivocation: To be ſure a man when he ſwears may always reſerve ſomething in his mind which will quite alter the ſenſe of whatever he can ſay or promiſe upon Oath. And this may be laid down for a certain Rule, That all departure from the ſimplicity of an Oath is a degree of Perjury, and a man is never a whit the leſs forſworn becauſe his Perjury is a little finer and more artificial than ordinary. And though men think by this device to ſave themſelves harmleſs from the guilt of ſo great a ſin, they do really increaſe it, by adding to their iniquity the impudent folly of mocking God and deceiving themſelves.

And whereas it is pleaded in the favour of *mental reſervation*, that the whole Propoſition, as made up of what is expreſt in words and of that which is reſerved in the mind, is true; For inſtance, if a man being ask'd upon Oath whether he be a Prieſt, ſhall anſwer he is not, reſerving in his mind that he is not a Prieſt of *Bacchus*, or ſome ſuch thing, the whole Propoſition is true, and then they ſay a man may ſwear to that which is true, without danger of Perjury: This is of no force, becauſe, though the whole Propoſition be true, it is deceitful, and contrary to that ſincerity which ought to be in an oath: And the end of an Oath is hereby likewiſe defeated, which is to aſcertain the truth of what we ſay: But if a man reſerve ſomething in his mind which alters the truth of what he ſays, the thing is ſtill as doubtful and uncertain as it was before. Beſides, if this be a good reaſon, a man may ſwear with reſervation in all caſes; becauſe the reaſon equally extends to all caſes; for if the truth of the Propoſition, as made

up

up of what is expreſs'd in words and reſerv'd in the mind, will excuſe a man from Perjury, then no man can be perjur'd that ſwears with reſervation: But this the *Caſuiſts* of the *Roman* Church do not allow, but only in ſome particular caſes, as *before an incompetent Judge*, or the like; for they ſee well enough that if this were allow'd in all caſes, it would deſtroy all Faith among men. And therefore ſince the reaſon extends alike to all caſes, it is plain that it is to be allow'd in none.

4thly. He is guilty of Perjury after the act, who having a real intention when he ſwears, to perform what he promiſeth, yet afterwards neglects to do it: Not for want of Power (for ſo long as that continues the obligation ceaſeth) but for want of Will, and due regard to his Oath.

Now that Perjury is a moſt heinous Sin, is evident, becauſe it is contrary to ſo plain and great a Law of God; one of the ten *Words* or *Precepts* of the Moral Law, *thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*; thou ſhalt not bring or apply the name of God to a falſhood: Or, as *Joſephus* renders it, *Thou ſhalt not adjure God to a falſe thing:* Which our Saviour renders yet more plainly, *Matt.* 5. 33. *Thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf.* For he ſeems to refer to the 3d Commandment when he ſays, *Ye have heard that it was ſaid to them of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf*, as he had done before to the 6th and 7th, when he ſays, *It was ſaid to them of old time, thou ſhalt not kill, thou ſhalt not commit adultery.* So that the primary, if not the ſole intention of this Law, *Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*, is to forbid the great ſin of Perjury. And I do not remember that in Scripture the phraſe of *taking God's name in vain*, is uſed in any other ſenſe. And thus it is certainly uſed, *Prov.* 30. 9. *Leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain, i. e.* leſt Poverty ſhould tempt me to ſteal, and ſtealth ſhould engage me in Perjury. For among the *Jews* an oath was tendered to him that was ſuſpected of theft, as appears from *Levit.* 6. 2. where it is ſaid, *If any one be guilty of theft, and lyeth concerning it, or ſweareth falſly; he ſhall reſtore all that about which he hath ſworn falſly. Leſt I ſteal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain*; that is, be perjured, being examined upon Oath, concerning a thing ſtoln. And for this reaſon the thief and the perjured perſon are put together, *Zech.* 5. 4. where it is ſaid, that *a curſe ſhall enter into the houſe of the thief, and of him that ſweareth falſly by the name of God.* From all which it is very probable, that the whole intention of the 3d Commandment is to forbid this great ſin of Perjury. To deter men from which, a ſevere threatning is there added; *for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain:* that is, he will moſt ſeverely puniſh ſuch a one. And 'tis very obſervable, that there is no threatning added to any other Commandment, but to *this* and the *ſecond*; Intimating to us that, next to Idolatry and the worſhip of a falſe God, Perjury is one of the greateſt affronts that can be offered to the divine Majeſty. This is one of thoſe ſins that cry ſo loud to Heaven, and quickens the pace of God's judgments, *Mal.* 3. 9. *I will come near to you in judgment, and be a ſwift witneſs againſt the ſwearer:* For this God threatens utter deſtruction to the man and his houſe, *Zech.* 5. 4 ſpeaking of the *curſe that goeth over the face of the whole earth: God* (ſays he) *will bring it forth, and it ſhall enter into the houſe of him that ſweareth falſly by the name of God, and ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall conſume it with the timber thereof and the ſtones thereof, It ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall conſume it.* This ſin by the ſecret judgment of God undermines Eſtates and Families to the utter ruin of them. And among the *Heathen* it was always reckoned one of the greateſt of Crimes, and which

they did believe God did not only punish upon the guilty person himself, but upon his Family and Posterity; and many times upon whole Nations, as the *Prophet* also tells us, that *because of Oaths the Land mourns.*

I need not use many words to aggravate this sin; it is certainly a Crime of the highest nature. Deliberate Perjury being directly against a man's knowledge, so that no man can commit it without staring his Conscience in the face; which is one of the greatest aggravations of any Crime. And it is equally a sin against *both Tables*; being the highest affront to God, and of most injurious consequence to men. It is an horrible abuse of the name of God, an open contempt of his Judgment, and an insolent defiance of his Vengeance: And in respect of men, it is not only a wrong to this or that particular person who suffers by it, but Treason against humane Society; subverting at once the foundations of publick Peace and Justice, and the private security of every man's life and fortune. It is a defeating of the best and last way that the wisdom of men could devise for the decision of doubtful matters. *Solomon* very fully and elegantly expresseth the destructive nature of this sin, *Prov.* 25. 18. *A false witness against his neighbour is a mawl, and a sword, and a sharp arrow:* Intimating, that amongst all the instruments of ruin and mischief that have been devised by mankind, none is of more pernicious consequence to humane Society than Perjury, and breach of Faith. It is a *pestilence that* usually *walketh in darkness*, and a secret stab and blow against which many times there is no possibility of defence.

And therefore it highly concerns those who upon these and the like occasions are called upon their Oath, whether as *Jurors* or *Witnesses*, to set God before their eyes, and to have his fear in their hearts whenever they come to take an Oath. And to govern and discharge their Consciences in this matter by known and approv'd Rules, and by the Resolutions of pious and wise men, and not by the loose Reasonings and Resolutions of *Pamphlets*, sent abroad to serve the turns of unpeaceable and ill-minded men (whether *Atheists*, or *Papists*, or others) on purpose to debauch the Consciences of men by teaching them to play fast and loose with Oaths. And it is a very sad sign of the decay of Christian Religion among us, to see so many who call themselves Christians, to make so little conscience of so great a sin, as even the Light of Nature would blush and tremble at.

I will conclude all with those excellent *Sayings* of the Son of *Sirach* concerning these two sins (I have been speaking of) prophane Swearing and Perjury, *Eccl.* 23. 9, 10, &c. *Accustom not thy mouth to swearing; neither use thy self to the naming of the holy one. A man that useth much swearing shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall never depart from his house. If he shall offend, his sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his sin, he maketh a double offence. And if he swear falsly he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of calamities.* And to represent to us the dreadful nature of this sin of Perjury, *There is* (saith he) *a word that is cloathed about with death*, meaning a rash and false Oath; *There is a word that is cloathed about with death, God grant it be not found in the heritage of Jacob: for all such things shall be far from the godly; and they will not wallow in these sins.* From which God preserve all good men, and make them careful to preserve themselves; as they value the present peace of their own consciences, and the favour of Almighty God in this world and the other, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ, To whom*, &c.

A SERMON

Preach'd at the

FUNERAL

Of the Reverend

Mr. Thomas Gouge,

The 4th of *November*, 1681.

At St. *Anne's Black-Fryars*:

With a brief Account of his Life.

TO THE

Right Worſhipful the PRESIDENT,

The TREASURER,

And the reſt of the Worthy Governours of the Hoſpital of *Chriſt-Church* in *LONDON.*

WHen upon the Requeſt of ſome of the Relations and Friends of the Reverend Mr. Gouge *deceaſed, and to ſpeak the truth, in compliance with mine own inclination to do right to the Memory of ſo good a Man, and to ſet ſo great an Example in the view of all Men, I had determined to make this Diſcourſe publick; I knew not where more fitly to addreſs it than to your ſelves, who are the living Pattern of the ſame Vertue, and the faithful Diſpenſers and Managers of one of the beſt and greateſt Charities in the World; eſpecially ſince he had a particular relation to you, and was pleaſed for ſome Years laſt paſt, without any other conſideration but that of Charity, to employ his conſtant pains in Catechiſing the poor Children of your Hoſpital; wiſely conſidering of how great conſequence it was to this City, to have the foundations of Religion well laid in the tender Years of ſo many Perſons as were afterwards to be planted there in ſeveral Profeſſions; and from a true humility of Mind, being ready to ſtoop to the meaneſt Office and Service to do good.*

I have heard from an intimate Friend of his, that he would ſometimes with great pleaſure ſay, that he had two Livings *which he would not exchange for two of the greateſt in* England, *meaning* Wales *and* Chriſt's Hoſpital; *Contrary to common account he eſteemed every advantage of being uſeful and ſerviceable to God and Men a rich* Benefice, *and thoſe his beſt* Patrons *and* Benefactors, *not who did him good, but who gave him the opportunity and means of doing it. To you therefore as his* Patrons, *this Sermon doth of right belong, and to you I humbly dedicate it; heartily beſeeching Almighty God, to raiſe up many by his Example, that may* ſerve their generation according to the will of God, *as he did. I am*

Your faithful and humble Servant,

Jo. Tillotſon.

SERMON

SERMON XXIII.

Preached at the Funeral of Mr. *Thomas Gouge*: With a ſhort Account of his Life.

LUKE XX. 37, 38.

Now that the dead are raiſed, even Moſes ſhewed at the buſh, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; For all live to him.

THE occaſion of theſe words of our bleſſed Saviour was an Objection which the *Sadduces* made againſt the Reſurrection, grounded upon a caſe which had ſometimes happened among them, of a Woman that had had ſeven Brethren ſucceſſively to her Husbands. Upon which caſe they put this Queſtion to our Saviour; *Whoſe wife of the ſeven ſhall this woman be at the Reſurrection?* That is, If men live in another world, how ſhall the controverſie between theſe ſeven Brethren be decided? for they all ſeem to have an equal claim to this Woman, each of them having had her to wife.

This captious Queſtion was not eaſie to be anſwered by the *Phariſees*, who fancied the enjoyments of the next life to be of the ſame kind with the ſenſual pleaſures of this world, only greater and more durable. From which Tradition of the *Jews* concerning a ſenſual Paradiſe, *Mahomet* ſeems to have taken the pattern of his: as he did likewiſe many other things from the *Jewiſh* Traditions. Now upon this ſuppoſition, that in the next life there will be marrying and giving in marriage, it was a Queſtion not eaſily ſatisfied, *Whoſe wife of the ſeven this woman ſhould then be?*

But our Saviour clearly avoids the whole force of it, by ſhewing the different ſtate of men in this world, and in the other. *The children of this world* (ſays he) *marry, and are given in marriage, but they who ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And he does not barely and magiſterially aſſert this Doctrine, but gives a plain and ſubſtantial Reaſon for it; becauſe *they cannot die any more.* After men have lived a while in this world they are taken away by death, and therefore marriage is neceſſary to maintain a ſucceſſion of mankind; but in the other world men ſhall become immortal and live for ever, and then the reaſon of marriage will wholly ceaſe: For when men can die no more, there will then be no need of any new ſupplies of mankind.

Our Saviour having thus cleared himſelf of this Objection by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produceth an Argument for the Proof of the Reſurrection, in the words of my Text; *Now that the dead are raiſed,*

Moses even shewed at the Bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. That is, when in one of his Books God is brought in speaking to him out of the Bush, and calling himself by the title of the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*. From whence our Saviour infers the Resurrection, because *God is not the God of the dead but the living: For all live to him.*

My design from these words is, to shew the force and strength of this Argument which our Saviour urgeth for the proof of the Resurrection. In order whereunto I shall,

First, Consider it is an Argument *ad hominem*, and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed.

Secondly, I shall enquire, Whether it be more than an Argument *ad hominem*. And if it be, wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist?

And then I shall apply this Doctrine of the Resurrection to the present Occasion.

I. *First*. We will consider it is an Argument *ad hominem*, and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed. And this will appear if we carefully consider these *four* things.

1. What our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument.

2. The extraordinary veneration which the *Jews* in general had for the Writings of *Moses*, above any other Books of the Old Testament.

3. The peculiar notion which the *Jews* had concerning the use of this Phrase or expression of *God's being any ones God*.

4. The great respect which the *Jews* had for these three Fathers of their Nation, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*. For each of these make our Saviour's Argument more forcible against those with whom he disputed.

First. We will consider what our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument. And that was this, That there is another state after this life, wherein men shall be happy or miserable according as they have lived in this world. And this doth not only suppose the immortality of the Soul, but forasmuch as the Body is an essential part of man, doth by consequence infer the resurrection of the Body; because otherwise the *man* would not be happy or miserable in another world. But I cannot see any sufficient ground to believe that our Saviour intended by this Argument directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the Body, but only by consequence, and as it follows from the admission of a future state wherein men shall be rewarded or punished. For that Reason of our Saviour, that *God is not a God of the dead but of the living*, if it did directly prove the resurrection of the Body, it would prove that the Bodies of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, were raised to life again, at or before that time when God spake to *Moses* and called himself the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*: But we do not believe this; and therefore ought not to suppose that it was the intention of our Saviour directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the Body, but only (as I said before) a future state. And that this was all our Saviour intended, will more plainly appear, if we consider what that Error of the *Sadduces* was which our Saviour here confutes. And *Josephus*, who very well understood the difference of the Sects among the *Jews*, and gives a particular account of them, makes not the least mention of any Controversie between the *Pharisees* and the *Sadduces* about the resurrection of the Body. All that he says, is this, That the *Pharisees* hold the Immortality of the Soul, and

and that there are Rewards and Punishments in another world: But the *Sadduces* denied all this, and that there was any other state after this life. And this is the very same account with that which is given of them in the *New Testament*, *ver.* 27. of this *Chap. The Sadduces who deny that there is any resurrection.* The meaning of which is more fully declared, *Act.* 23. 8. *The Sadduces say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.* That is, the *Sadduces* denied that there was any other state of men after this life, and that there was any such thing as an immortal Spirit, either Angels, or the Souls of men surviving their Bodies. And, as Dr. *Hammond* hath judiciously observed, this is the true importance of the word ἀνάςασις, *viz.* a *future* or *another state*; unless in such Texts where the Context does restrain it to the raising again of the Body, or where some word that denotes the *body*, as σώματος or σαρκὸς, is added to it.

Secondly. The force of this Argument against those with whom our Saviour disputed will farther appear, if we consider the great veneration which the *Jews* in general had for the Writings of *Moses* above any other Books of the Old Testament; which they (especially the *Sadduces*) looked upon only as Explications and Comments upon the Law of *Moses*: But they esteemed nothing as a necessary Article of Faith which had not some foundation in the Writings of *Moses*. And this seems to me to be the true Reason why our Saviour chose to confute them out of *Moses*, rather than any other part of the Old Testament: And not as many learned men have imagined, because the *Sadduces* did not receive any part of the Old Testament, but only the *five* Books of *Moses*; so that it was in vain to argue against them out of any other. This I know hath been a general opinion, grounded I think upon the mistake of a passage in *Josephus*, who says the *Sadduces only receive the written Law.* But if we carefully consider that passage, we shall find that *Josephus* doth not there oppose the Law to the *other Books* of the Old Testament, which were also *written*; but to *Oral Tradition.* For he says expresly, that *the Sadduces only received the written Law, but the Pharisees, over and besides what was written, received the Oral which they call Tradition.*

I deny not but that in the *later* Prophets there are more express *Texts* for the proof of a future state, than any are to be found in the Books of *Moses*; as *Daniel* 12. 2. *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* And indeed it seems very plain that holy men among the *Jews*, towards the expiration of the Legal dispensation, had still clearer and more express apprehensions concerning a future state than are to be met with in the Writings of *Moses*, or of any of the *Prophets.*

The Law given by *Moses* did suppose the *Immortality of the Souls of men*, and the *expectation of another life after this*, as Principles of Religion in some degree naturally known; but made no new and express Revelation of these things. Nor was there any occasion for it, the Law of *Moses* being a Political Law, not intended for the Government of Mankind, but of one particular Nation; and therefore was establish'd, as Political Laws are, upon temporal promises and threatnings; promising temporal prosperity to the observation of its precepts, and threatning the breach of them with temporal judgments and calamities.

And this I take to be the true reason why arguments fetch'd from another world are so obscurely insisted upon under that Dispensation; not but that another life after this was always suppos'd, and was undoubtedly the hope and expectation of good men under the Law, but the clear disco-

very

very of it was reserv'd for the Times of the *Messias*. And therefore as those Times drew on, and *the Son of righteousness* was near his rising, the shadows of the night began to be chased away, and mens apprehensions of a future state to clear up; so that in the time of the *Maccabees* good men spake with more confidence and assurance of these things.

It is likewise to be consider'd, that the temporal calamities and sufferings with which the *Jews* were almost continually harass'd from the time of their Captivity had very much wean'd good men from the consideration of temporal promises, and awaken'd their minds to the more serious thoughts of another world. It being natural to men when they are destitute of present comfort, to support themselves with the expectation of better things for the future, and as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* expresseth it, *Chap.* 6. *v.* 18. *To fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is before them*, and to employ their reason to fortifie themselves as well as they can in that perswasion.

And this I doubt not was the true occasion of those clearer and riper apprehensions of good men concerning a future state, in those times of distress and persecution: it being very agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of the Divine Providence not to leave his People destitute of sufficient support under great trials and sufferings: And nothing but the hopes of a better life could have born up the spirits of men under such cruel tortures. And of this we have a most remarkable Instance in the History of the *seven Brethren* in the *Maccabees*, who being cruelly tortured and put to death by *Antiochus*, do most expresly declare their confident expectation of a resurrection to a better life. To which History the *Apostle* certainly refers, *Heb.* 11. 35. when he says, *Others were tortured, not excepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection:* where the word, which we render *were tortur'd*, is ἐτυμπανίσθησαν, which is the very word used in the *Maccabees* to express the particular kind of torture us'd upon them; besides that being *offer'd deliverance* they most resolutely *refus'd* to *accept* of it, with this express declaration, that they hop'd for a *resurrection* to a *better* life.

But to return to my purpose; Notwithstanding there might be more clear and express *Texts* to this purpose in the ancient *Prophets*, yet our Saviour knowing how great a regard not only the *Sadduces*, but all the *Jews* had to the Authority of *Moses*, he thought fit to bring his proof of the resurrection out of his Writings, as that which was the most likely to convince them.

Thirdly. If we consider farther the peculiar Notion which the *Jews* had concerning the use of this phrase or expression of *God's being any ones God*. And that was this: That God is no where in Scripture said to be any ones God while he was alive. And therefore they tell us that while *Isaac* lived, God is not called the God of *Isaac*, but the *fear of Isaac*. As *Gen.* 31. 42. *Except the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me*; and *Ver.* 53. when *Laban* made a Covenant with *Jacob*, 'tis said that *Laban did swear by the God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, and the God of their Fathers*, but *Jacob* swore *by the fear of his Father Isaac*. I will not warrant this Observation to be good, because I certainly know it is not true. For God doth expresly call himself the God of *Isaac*, while *Isaac* was yet alive, *Genes.* 28. 13. *I am the Lord God of Abraham thy Father, and the God of Isaac*. It is sufficient to my purpose, that this was a Notion anciently current among the *Jews*. And therefore our Saviour's Argument from this Expression must be so much the stronger against *them*: For if the Souls of Men be extinguish'd by death (as the *Sadduces* believ'd) what did it signifie to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, to have God called *their God*, after they were

were dead? But surely, for God to be any ones God, doth signify some great benefit and advantage; which yet (according to the notion which the *Jews* had of this Phrase) could not respect this Life, because, according to *them*, God is not said to be any ones God till after he is dead: But it is thus said of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, after their death, and therefore our Saviour infers very strongly against *them*, that *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, were not extinguished by death, but do still live somewhere: for *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* And then he adds by way of further Explication, *for all live to him.* That is, though those good men who are departed this life, do not still live *to us*, here in this World, yet *they live to God*, and are with him.

Fourthly, If we consider the great respect which the *Jews* had for those three Fathers of their Nation, *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*. They had an extraordinary Opinion of them, and esteemed nothing too great to be thought or said of them. And therefore, we find that they looked upon it as a great arrogance for any man to assume any thing to himself that might seem to set him above *Abraham*, *Isaac* or *Jacob*. With what indignation did they fly upon our Saviour on this account? *Joh.* 4. 12. *Art thou greater than our father Jacob?* and *chap.* 8. *vers.* 53. *Art thou greater than our father* Abraham? *whom makest thou thy self?* Now they who had so superstitious a veneration for them, would easily believe any thing of privilege to belong to them: so that our Saviour doth with great advantage instance in them, in favour of whom they would be inclined to extend the meaning of any promise to the utmost, and allow it to signifie as much as the words could possibly bear. So that it is no wonder that the *Text* tells us that this Argument put the *Sadduces* to silence. They durst not attempt a thing so odious, as to go about to take away any thing of privilege from *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*.

And thus I have, as briefly as the matter would bear, endeavoured to shew the fitness and force of this Argument to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed. I come now, in the

II. *Second* place, to inquire, Whether this be any more than an argument *ad hominem*; and if it be, wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist? II.

I do not think it necessary to believe that every Argument used by our Saviour, or his Apostles, is absolutely and in it self conclusive of the matter in debate. For an Argument which doth not really prove the thing in Question, may yet be a very good Argument *ad hominem*; and in some cases more convincing to him with whom we dispute, than that which is a better Argument in it self. Now it is possible, that our Saviour's intention might not be to bring a conclusive proof of the Resurrection, but only to confute those who would needs be disputing with him. And to that purpose an Argument *ad hominem*, which proceeded upon grounds which they themselves could not deny, might be very proper and effectual. But although it be not necessary to believe, that this was more than an Argument *ad hominem*; yet it is the better to us, if it be absolutely and in it self conclusive of the thing in Question. And this I hope will sufficiently appear, if we consider these *four* things.

1. That for God to be *any ones God* doth signifie some very extraordinary blessing and happiness to those persons of whom this is said.

2. If we consider the eminent faith and obedience of the persons to whom this promise is made.

3. Their condition in this world.

4. The general importance of this promise abstracting from the persons particularly specified and named in it, *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*.

First, If we consider that for God to be *any ones God* doth signifie some very extraordinary blessing and happiness to those persons of whom this is said. It is a big word for God to declare himself to be *any ones God*: and the least we can imagine to be meant by it, is that God will in an extraordinary manner employ his power and wisdom to do him good: that he will concern himself more for the happiness of those whose God he declares himself to be, than for others.

Secondly, If we consider the eminent faith and obedience of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*. *Abraham* left his Country in obedience to God, not knowing whither he was to go. And which was one of the most unparallel'd and strange instances of faith and obedience that can almost be imagined, he was willing to have sacrificed his only Son at the command of God. *Isaac* and *Jacob* were also very good men, and devout worshippers of the true God, when almost the whole world was sunk into Idolatry and all manner of impiety. Now what can we imagine, but that the good God did design some extraordinary reward to such faithful servants of his? especially if we consider, that he intended this gracious declaration of his concerning them, for a standing encouragement to all those who in after Ages should follow the faith, and tread in the steps of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*.

Thirdly, If we consider the condition of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* in this world. The Scripture tells us, that *they were pilgrims and strangers upon the earth*; had no fixed and settled habitation, but were forced to wander from one Kingdom and Country to another; that they were exposed to many hazards and difficulties, to great troubles and afflictions in this world; so that there was no such peculiar happiness befell them in this life above the common rate of men, as may seem to fill up the big words of this promise, that *God would be their God*. For so far as the Scripture History informs us, and further we cannot know of this matter, *Esau* was as prosperous as *Jacob*; and *Jacob* had a great many more troubles and afflictions in this life than *Esau* had. But surely when God calls himself *the God of Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, this signifies that God intended some very peculiar blessing and advantage to them above others: which seeing they did not enjoy in this world, it is very reasonable to believe that one time or other this gracious declaration and promise of God was made good to them.

And therefore the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, *chap.* 11. from this very expression of *God's* being said *to be the God of Abraham* and others, argues that some extraordinary happiness was reserved for them in another world: and that upon this very ground I am now speaking of, namely, because the condition of *Abraham* and some others, was not such in this world as might seem to answer the fulness of this promise. *All these*, says he, *died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were perswaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the Earth.* From whence he reasons very strongly, that these good men might reasonably expect something better than any thing that had befallen them in this World. For *they*, says he, *that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a Country*; which at the 16th *verse* he calls *a better Country, that is a heavenly*. *They that say such things*; that is, they who acknowledge themselves

themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in the Earth, and yet pretend that God hath promised *to be their God*, declare plainly that they expect some reward beyond this life. From all which he concludes, *Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he hath prepared for them a City*, intimating that if no happiness had remained for these good men in another world, this promise of God's *being their God*, would shamefully have fallen short of what it seemed to import, *viz.* some extraordinary reward and blessing worthy of God to bestow; something more certain and lasting, than any of the enjoyments of this world; which since God had abundantly performed to them in the happiness of another life, his promise to them was made good to the full, and he needed not *be ashamed to be called their God*. But if nothing beyond this life had been reserved for them, that Saying of old *Jacob* towards the conclusion of his life, *few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, would have been an eternal reflection upon the truth and faithfulness of him who had so often called himself the God of *Jacob*.

But now, because to all this it may be said, that this Promise seems to have been made good to *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, in this world: For was not God the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, when he took such a particular and extraordinary care of them, and protected them from the manifold dangers they were exposed to by such a special and immediate providence, *suffering no one to do them harm*, *but rebuking even Kings for their sakes?* Was not he *Abraham*'s God, when he blest him so miraculously with a Son in his old Age, and with so considerable an estate to leave to him? Was not that Saying of *Jacob* a great acknowledgment of the gracious providence of God towards him, *With my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands?* And though it must needs be a very cutting affliction to him to lose his Son *Joseph*, as he thought he had done, yet that was more than recompenced to him in *Joseph*'s strange advancement in *Egypt*, whereby God put into his Hands the opportunity of saving his Father and his whole Family alive. And was not God the *God of Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, in making them Fathers of so numerous an off-spring, as afterwards became a *great Nation*: and in giving them a fruitful Land; and bringing them to the quiet possession of it by such a *series* of wonderful Miracles? what need then is there of extending this promise to another world? doth it not seem abundantly made good in those great blessings which God bestowed upon them whilst they liv'd, and afterwards upon their posterity, in this world? And does not this agree well enough with the first and most obvious sense of these words, *I am the God of Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*; that is, I am he that was their God while they were alive, and am still the God of their posterity for their sakes; I say, because the *three* former Considerations are liable to this Objection, which seems wholly to take off the force of this Argument; therefore, for the full clearing of this matter, I will add one consideration more.

Fourthly then, we will consider the general importance of this Promise, abstracting from the particular persons specified and named in it, *viz. Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*; and that is, that God will make a wide and plain difference between good and bad men; he will be *so* the God of good men as he is not of the wicked: and some time or other put every good man into a better and happier condition than any wicked man: so that the general importance of this promise is finally resolved into the equity and justice of the Divine Providence.

And unlefs we fuppofe another life after this, it will certainly be very hard, and I think impoffible, to reconcile the Hiftory of the Old Teftament, and the common appearances of things in this World, with the Juftice and Goodnefs of God's Providence.

It cannot be denied, but that *Abraham*, *Ifaac* and *Jacob*, and feveral good men in the Old Teftament, had many fignal Teftimonies of the divine favour vouchfafed to them in this world: But we read likewife of feveral wicked men that had as large a fhare of temporal bleffings. It is very true that *Abraham*, *Ifaac* and *Jacob*, had great eftates, and were petty Princes: But *Pharoah* was a mighty Prince in comparifon of them; and the Kingdom of *Egypt*, which probably was the firft and chief feat of Idolatry, was at the fame time one of the moft potent and flourifhing Kingdoms in the world: and was bleft with a prodigious plenty, whereby they were furnifhed with ftore of Corn when good *Jacob* and his Family had like to have perifhed by famine. 'Tis true, *Jofeph* was advanc'd to great power in *Egypt*, and thereby had the opportunity of faving his Father's houfe, by fetling them, and feeding them in *Egypt*: But then it is to be confidered again, that this coft them very dear, and their coming thither was the occafion of a long and cruel bondage to *Jacob*'s Pofterity, fo that we fee that thefe good men had no fuch bleffings, but what were common with them to many others that were wicked: and the bleffings which God beftowed upon them, had great abatements by the intermixture of many and fore afflictions.

It feems then upon the whole matter, to be very plain, that the Providences of God in this world towards good men are fo contriv'd, that it may fufficiently appear, to thofe who wifely confider the works of God, that they are not neglected by him; and yet that thefe outward bleffings are fo promifcuoufly difpenfed, that no man can certainly be concluded to be a good man from any happinefs he enjoys in this life; And the profperity of good men is ufually on purpofe fo fhadowed and mixed with afflictions, as may juftly raife their hopes, to the expectation of a more perfect happinefs and better reward, than any they meet with in this world.

And if fo, then the general importance of this Promife, that *God will be the God* of good men, muft neceffarily fignifie fomething beyond this world: Becaufe in this world there is not that clear difference univerfally made between good and bad men which the Juftice of the Divine Providence doth require, and which feems to be intended, in the general fenfe of this Promife. For if this Promife (though perfonally made to *Abraham*, *Ifaac* and *Jacob*) be intended, as the Scripture tells us it was for a ftanding encouragement to good men in all Ages, then it muft contain in it this general Truth, *that God will fome time or other plentifully reward every good man*; that is, he will do fomething far better for him, than for any wicked man: But if there be no life after this, it is impoffible to reconcile this fenfe of it with the courfe of God's Providence, and with the Hiftory of the Bible.

And to make this out fully, and at once, I will only produce that fingle inftance of *Abel* and *Cain*. *Abel* offer'd to God *a more excellent facrifice than Cain*, and he *had this teftimony, that he pleafed God*; which was in effect to declare, that *God was the God of Abel*, and not of *Cain*; fo that by virtue of the general importance of this Promife, it might juftly be expected, that *Abel*'s condition fhould have been much better than *Cain*'s:

But

But if there be no happineſs after this life, *Abel*'s was evidently much worſe. For upon this very account, that *he pleaſed God better*, he was killed by *Cain*, who had offered to God a ſlight and contemptuous offering. And *Cain* lived a long time after, and grew great, and *built Cities*. Now ſuppoſing there were no other life after this, this muſt have been a moſt horrible Example to all Ages, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, and have made men for ever afraid to pleaſe God upon ſuch hard terms; when they were ſure of no other reward for ſo doing, but to be oppreſs'd and ſlain by the hands of the wicked. So that if this were really the Caſe, it would puzzle all the Wit and Reaſon of mankind to vindicate the equity and juſtice of the Divine Providence, and to reſcue it out of the hands of this terrible Objection.

And thus have I as briefly as I could, endeavoured to clear to you the force of this Argument uſed by our Saviour for the proof of the Reſurrection. And have the longer inſiſted upon it, becauſe at firſt appearance it ſeems to be but a very obſcure and remote Argument: And yet ſo much the more neceſſary to be clear'd, becauſe this in all probability was that very *Text* upon which the *Jews* in our Saviour's time grounded their belief of a future ſtate, in oppoſition to the error of the *Sadduces*; and which they call'd by way of eminency *the promiſe made of God unto the Fathers*. As will plainly appear, if we conſider what St. *Paul* ſays to this purpoſe; when he appeals ſo often to the *Phariſees* for his agreement with them in this Article of the Reſurrection, and likewiſe in the ground of it from *the promiſe made of God unto the fathers*. Acts 24. 14, 15. *But this I confeſs unto thee, that after the way which they call hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets; and have hope towards God, which they themſelves alſo allow, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead.* From whence it is clear, that they both grounded their hope of the reſurrection upon ſomething *written in the Law and the Prophets*: and what that was, he expreſſeth more particular, *c.* 26. *v.* 6, 7. *And now I ſtand, and am judged for the hope of the promiſe made of God unto our Fathers; unto which promiſe our twelve Tribes, inſtantly ſerving God day and night, hope to come. By the promiſe made of God unto the Fathers*, he means ſome promiſe made by God to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*; for ſo St. *Luke* more than once, in his Hiſtory of the *Acts*, explains this phraſe *of the God of their Fathers*, Acts 3. 13. *The God of* Abraham, *and of* Iſaac, *and of* Jacob, *the God of our Fathers*; and *c.* 7. *v.* 32. *I am the God of thy Fathers, the God of* Abraham, *and the God of* Iſaac, *and the God of* Jacob. Now what was the great and famous Promiſe which God made to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*? was it not this of being *their God*? So that it was this very Promiſe upon which St. *Paul* tells us, the *Jews* grounded their hope of a future ſtate, becauſe they underſtood it neceſſarily to ſignifie ſome bleſſing and happineſs beyond this life.

And now having, I hope, ſufficiently clear'd this matter, I ſhall make ſome improvement of this Doctrine, of a future ſtate, and that to theſe three purpoſes.

1. To raiſe our minds above this world, and the enjoyments of this preſent life. Were but men throughly convinced of this plain and certain Truth, that there is a vaſt difference between Time and Eternity, between a few years and everlaſting Ages: would we but repreſent to our ſelves what thoughts and apprehenſions dying perſons have of this

world; how vain and empty a thing it appears to them, how like a pageant and a shadow it looks as it passeth away from them, methinks none of these things could be a sufficient temptation to any man to forget God and his soul; but notwithstanding all the delights and pleasures of sense, we should be strangely intent upon the concernments of another world, and almost wholly taken up, with the thoughts of that vast Eternity which we are ready to launch into. For what is there in this world, this *waste and howling wilderness*, this rude and barbarous Country which we are but to pass through, which should detain our affections here, and take off our thoughts from our everlasting habitation; from that *better* and that *heavenly Country*, where we hope to live and be happy for ever?

If we settle our affections upon the enjoyments of this present Life, so as to be extreamly pleas'd and transported with them, and to say in our hearts, *It is good for us to be here*; if we be excessively griev'd or discontented for the want or loss of them, and if we look upon our present state in this world any otherwise than as a preparation and passage to a better life, it is a sign that our faith and hope of the happiness of another life is but very weak and faint, and that we do not heartily and in good earnest believe what we pretend to do concerning these things. For did we stedfastly believe and were throughly perswaded of what our Religion so plainly declares to us concerning the unspeakable and endless happiness of good men in another world, our affections would sit more loose to this world, and our hopes would raise our hearts as much above these present and sensible things, *as the heavens are high above the earth*; we should value nothing here below, but as it serves for our present support and passage, or may be made a means to secure and encrease our future felicity.

2. The consideration of another Life should quicken our preparation for that blessed state which remains for us in the other world. This Life is a state of probation and trial. This world is God's school, where immortal spirits clothed with flesh are trained and bred up for eternity. And then certainly it is not an indifferent thing, and a matter of slight concernment to us, how we live and demean our selves in this world; whether we indulge our selves in *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, or *live soberly, and righteously, and godly* in this present world: No; it is a matter of infinite moment, as much as our Souls and all Eternity are worth. Let us not deceive our selves; *for as we sow, so shall we reap: If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the spirit, we shall of the spirit reap everlasting life. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The righteous hath hopes in his death. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

But the ungodly are not so: whoever hath lived a wicked and vicious life, feels strange throws and pangs in his conscience when he comes to be cast upon a sick bed. *The wicked is like the troubled sea* (saith the *Prophet*) *when it cannot rest*; full of trouble and confusion, especially in a dying hour. It is death to such a man to look back upon his life, and a hell to him to think of eternity. When his guilty and trembling Soul is ready to leave his Body, and just stepping into the other world, what horrour and amazement do then seize upon him? what a rage doth such a man feel in his breast, when he seriously considers, that he hath been so great a fool as for the false and imperfect pleasure of a few days, to make himself miserable for ever?

3. Let

3. Let the consideration of that unspeakable Reward which God hath promised to good men at the Resurrection, encourage us to obedience and a holy life. We serve a great Prince who is able to promote us to honour; a most gracious Master who will not let the least service we do for him pass unrewarded. This is the inference which the Apostle makes from this large discourse of the Doctrine of the Resurrection, 1 *Cor.* 15. 58. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* Nothing will make death more welcome to us, than a constant course of service and obedience to God. *Sleep,* saith *Solomon, is sweet to the labouring man:* so after a great diligence and industry in *working out our own salvation,* and (as it is said of *David*) *serving our generation according to the will of God,* how pleasant will it be to fall asleep? And as an useful and well-spent life will make our death to be sweet, so our Resurrection to be glorious. Whatever acts of Piety we do to God, or of charity to men; whatever we lay out upon the poor and afflicted, and necessitous, will all be considered by God in the day of recompences, and most plentifully rewarded to us.

And surely no consideration ought to be more prevalent to perswade us to alms-deeds and charity to the poor, than that of a Resurrection to another life. Besides the promises of this life which are made to works of charity, and there is not any grace or vertue whatsover, which hath so many and so great promises of temporal blessings made to it in Scripture as this grace of Charity; I say, besides the promises of this Life, the great promise of eternal Life is in Scripture in a more especial manner entail'd upon it. *Luke* 12. 33. *Give alms,* saith our Saviour, *provide your selves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not;* and *c.* 16. *v.* 9. *make to your selves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye shall fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* And 1 *Tim.* 6. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded,* &c. *that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life;* the word θεμέλιος, which our Translation renders *foundation,* according to the common use of it, seems in this place to have a more peculiar Notion, and to signifie the *security* that is given by a *pledge,* or by an *instrument* or obligation of *contract* for the performance of *Covenants.* For besides that the phrase of *laying up in store, or treasuring up a foundation,* seems to be a very odd jumbling of metaphors; this very word θεμέλιος almost necessarily requires this notion as it is used by the same *Apostle,* in his second *Epistle* to *Timothy,* chap. 2. v. 19. where it is said, *the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal,* &c. a *seal* being very improper *to strengthen a foundation,* but very fit *to confirm a Covenant.* And then surely it ought to be render'd, *the Covenant of God remains firm, having this seal.* And so likewise in the forementioned Text, the sense will be much more easy and current if we render it thus, *treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good security* or *pledge against the time to come;* I add *pledge,* because that anciently was the common way of security for things lent: besides that the Apostle seems plainly to allude to that passage, *Tobit* 4. 8, 9. *If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly,* &c. *for thou layest up a good treasure for thy self against the day of necessity,* θέμα γὰρ ἀγαθὸν θησαυρίζεις, *for thou treasurest up for thy self a good Pledge;* to which this of the Apostle exactly answers, ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς θεμέλιον καλὸν, *treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good pledge or security,* &c. the sense however

is

is plain, that the charity of Alms is one of the beſt ways of ſecuring our future happineſs.

And yet further to encourage us to abound in works of charity, the Scripture tells us, that proportionably to the degrees of our charity ſhall be the degrees of our reward; upon this conſideration the *Apoſtle* exhorts the *Corinthians* to be liberal in their Charity, 2 *Cor.* 9. 6. *he that ſoweth ſparingly ſhall reap ſparingly, but he that ſoweth bountifully ſhall reap bountifully.* So that whatever we lay out in this kind, is to the *greateſt advantage*, and upon the *beſt ſecurity*; two conſiderations which uſe to be very prevalent with rich men to lay out their money.

We certainly do it to the *greateſt advantage*; becauſe God will conſider the very ſmalleſt thing that any of us do in this kind. He that ſhall *give* ſo much as *a cup of cold water to a diſciple, in the name of a diſciple, ſhall not loſe his reward*; theſe laſt words *ſhall not loſe his reward*, are a *μείωσις*, and ſignifie much more than they ſeem to ſpeak, *viz.* that he ſhall have a very great reward, infinitely beyond the value of what he hath done.

And we do it likewiſe upon the *beſt ſecurity*; ſo *Solomon* aſſures us, *Prov.* 19. 17. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given he will pay him again:* and we may be confident of our ſecurity where God is ſurety; nay, he tells us that in this caſe he looks upon himſelf as principal, and that whatever we do in ways of mercy and charity to the poor, he takes as done to himſelf. So our Lord hath told us, *Matth.* 25. 40. and we ſhall hear the ſame from him again out of his own mouth, when he ſhall appear in his Majeſty to judge the world, *Then the King ſhall anſwer and ſay unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

And on the other ſide, the Scripture no where paſſeth a more ſevere doom upon any ſort of perſons, than upon thoſe who have no bowels of compaſſion towards their brethren in diſtreſs. That is a fearful ſentence indeed, which the Apoſtle pronounceth upon ſuch perſons, *James* 2. 13. *He ſhall have judgment without mercy that hath ſhewed no mercy.* And this our Saviour repreſents to us in a moſt ſolemn manner, in that lively deſcription which he makes of the Judgment of the great day, *Matth.* 25. 31. &c. *When the Son of man ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon the throne of his glory: and before him ſhall be gathered all nations, and he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, as a ſheperd divideth the ſheep from the goats. And he ſhall ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then ſhall the King ſay unto them on his right hand, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, before the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat, I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink; I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye cloathed me; I was ſick, and ye viſited me; I was in priſon, and ye came unto me. Then ſhall He ſay alſo unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat,* &c. *And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment; but the righteous into life eternal.* And if this be, as moſt certainly it is, a true and proper repreſentation of the proceſs of that Day, then the great matter of enquiry will be, What works of charity and mercy have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly a Sentence of eternal happineſs, or miſery, will be paſs'd upon us: I was hungry, did ye feed me, or did ye not? I was naked, did ye cloth me, or did ye not? I was ſick and in priſon, did ye viſit me, or did ye not? Not but that all the good or evil of our lives, in what kind ſoever, ſhall then be brought to account; But that our Saviour did chuſe

to instance particularly, and only in things of this nature, should methinks make a mighty impression upon us, and be a powerful consideration to oblige us to have a very peculiar regard to works of mercy and charity, and to make sure to *abound in this Grace*; that when we shall appear before the great Judge of the World, we may find that mercy from Him, which we have shew'd to others, and which we shall all undoubtedly stand in need of *in that Day*.

And among all our acts of charity, those which are done upon least probability and foresight of their meeting with any recompence in this world, either by way of real requital or of fame and reputation, as they are of all other most acceptable to God, so they will certainly have the most ample reward in another world. So our Lord hath assured us, and accordingly adviseth us, *Luke* 14. 12, 13, 14. *When thou makest a feast, invite not the rich, because they will recompense thee again: but call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind, for they cannot recompence thee, but thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the just.* If we be Religious for worldly ends and serve God, and do good to men, only in contemplation of some temporal advantage, we take up with present payment, and cut our selves short of our future reward: of such, saith our Lord, *Verily I say unto you, they have their reward:* they are their own security, and have taken care to satisfie themselves, and therefore are to expect nothing from God. But let us who call our selves Christians do something for God, for which we have no hopes to be recompenced in this world; that we may shew that we trust God, and take his word, and dare venture upon the security of the next world, and that *recompence* which shall be made *at the resurrection of the just*.

And how great and glorious that shall be, our Saviour tells us immediately before my *Text*. *They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, they can die no more, but they are equal to the Angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the Resurrection.* If then we be heirs of such glorious hopes, and believe that he who is *the God of Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*, will also be our God: let us live as it becomes the Candidates of heaven, and the *children of the Resurrection*, and such as verily believe another life after this, and hope one day to *sit down with Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob, in the Kingdom of God.*

And now that I have represented to you what encouragement there is to well-doing, and particularly to works of Charity, from the consideration of the blessed reward we shall certainly meet with at the Resurrection of the just; I shall crave your patience a little longer, whilst I propose to you one of the fairest Examples of this kind which either this, or perhaps any other Age could easily present us withal: I mean our deceased Brother to whom we are now paying our last solemn respects, the Reverend Mr. *THOMAS GOUGE*; the worthy Son of a reverend and learned Divine of this City, Dr. *William Gouge*; who was Minister of this Parish of *Black Friars* six and forty years; he dyed in 1653, and still lives in the memory of many here present.

I must confess that I am no friend to Funeral *Panegyricks*, where there is nothing of extraordinary worth and merit in the party commended to give occasion and foundation for them: In such cases, as praises are not due to the dead, so they may be of ill consequence to the living: not only by bringing those of our profession that make a practice of it, under the suspicion of officious and mercenary flattery, but likewise by encouraging men to hope that they also may be well spoken of, and even Sainted when they

are dead, though they ſhould have done little or no good in their life: But yet on the other hand, to commend thoſe excellent Perſons the vertues of whoſe lives have been bright and exemplary, is not only a piece of juſtice due to the dead, but an Act of great charity to the living, ſetting a pattern of well-doing before our eyes, very apt and powerful to incite and encourage us *to go and do likewiſe.*

Upon both theſe Conſiderations, firſt to do right to the memory of ſo good a man, and then in hopes that the example may prove fruitful and have a conſiderable effect upon others to beget the like goodneſs and charity in them, I ſhall endeavour, in as narrow a compaſs as may be, to give you the juſt character of this truly pious and charitable Man, and by ſetting his life in a true light to recommend with all the advantage I can ſo excellent a pattern to your imitation.

He was born at *Bow* near *Stratford* in the County of *Middleſex* the 19th day of *September* 1605. He was bred at *Eaton* School, and from thence choſen to *King*'s College in *Cambridge*, being about 20 years of Age, in the year 1626. After he had finiſh'd the courſe of his ſtudies, and taken his Degrees, he left the *Univerſity* and his *Fellowſhip*, being preſented to the living of *Colſden* near *Croyden* in *Surrey*, where he continued about two or three years; and from thence was remov'd to St. *Sepulchres* in *London*, in the year 1638. and the year after thinking fit to change his condition match'd into a very worthy and ancient Family, marrying one of the Daughters of Sir *Robert Darcy*.

Being thus ſettled in this large and populous *Pariſh*, he did with great ſolicitude and pains diſcharge all the parts of a vigilant and faithful Miniſter, for above the ſpace of 24 years. For beſides his conſtant and weekly labour of preaching, he was very diligent and charitable in viſiting the ſick, and miniſtring not only ſpiritual counſel and comfort to them, but likewiſe liberal relief to the wants and neceſſities of thoſe that were poor and deſtitute of means to help themſelves, in that condition. He did alſo every morning throughout the year Catechiſe in the Church, eſpecially the poorer ſort who were generally moſt ignorant; and to encourage them to come thither to be inſtructed by him, he did once a week diſtribute money among them, not upon a certain day, but changing it on purpoſe as he thought good, that he might thereby oblige them to be conſtantly preſent; Theſe were chiefly the more aged poor, who being paſt labour had leiſure enough to attend upon this exerciſe. As for the other ſort of poor who were able to work for their living, he ſet them at work upon his own charge, buying Flax and Hemp for them to ſpin, and what they ſpun he took off their hands, paying them for their work, and then got it wrought into Cloth, and ſold it as he could, chiefly among his friends, himſelf bearing the whole loſs. And this was a very wiſe and well-choſen way of charity, and in the good effect of it a much greater charity than if he had given theſe very perſons freely and for nothing ſo much as they earned by their work; becauſe by this means he took many off from begging, and thereby reſcued them at once from two of the moſt dangerous temptations of this world, *Idleneſs* and *Poverty*; and by degrees reclaim'd them to a vertuous and induſtrious courſe of life, which enabled them afterwards to live without being beholden to the charity of others.

And this courſe ſo happily deviſ'd and begun by Mr. *Gouge* in his own Pariſh was I think that which gave the firſt hint to that worthy and uſeful Citizen Mr. *Thomas Firmin* of a much larger deſign, which hath been proſecuted by him for ſome years with that vigour and good ſucceſs in this City,

that

that many hundreds of poor Children, and others who liv'd idle before, unprofitable both to themselves and the publick, are continually maintain'd at work, and taught to earn their own livelihood much in the same way: He being, by the generous assistance and charity of many worthy and well-dispos'd Persons of all ranks, enabled to bear the unavoidable loss and charge of so vast an undertaking; and by his own forward inclination to charity, and his unwearied diligence and activity, extraordinarily fitted to sustain and go through the incredible pains of it.

But to return to our deceased Friend; concerning whom I must content my self to pass over many things worthy to be remembred of him, and to speak only of those Vertues of his which were more eminent and remarkable.

Of his Piety towards God, which is the necessary foundation of all other Graces and Vertues, I shall only say this, That it was great and quiet without stir and noise, and much more in Substance and Reality, than in shew and ostentation; and did not consist in censuring and finding fault with others, but in the due care and [illegible]vernment of his own life and actions, and *exercising* himself, *continually to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men*; in which he was such a proficient, that even after a long acquaintance and familiar conversation with him, it was not easie to observe any thing that might deserve blame.

He particularly excell'd in the more peculiar vertues of conversation, in *modesty*, *humility*, *meekness*, *cheerfulness*, and in *kindness* and *charity towards all men*.

So great was his *modesty*, that it never appear'd either by word or action that he put any value upon himself. This I have often observ'd in him, that the Charities which were procur'd chiefly by his Application and Industry, when he had occasion to give an account of them, he would rather impute to any one who had but the least hand and part in the obtaining of them, than assume any thing of it to himself. Another instance of his modesty was, that when he had quitted his Living of St. *Sepulchres* upon some dissatisfaction about the terms of conformity, he willingly forbore preaching, saying there was no need of him here in *London* where there were so many worthy Ministers, and that he thought he might do as much or more good in another way which could give no offence. Only in the latter years of his life, being better satisfy'd in some things he had doubted of before, He had License from some of the Bishops to preach in *Wales* in his progress; which he was the more willing to do, because in some places he saw great need of it, and he thought he might do it with greater advantage among the poor People, who were the more likely to regard his instructions, being recommended by his great charity so well known to them, and of which they had so long had the experience and benefit. But where there was no such need, he was very well contented to hear others perswade men to goodness and to practise it himself.

He was *clothed with humility*, and had in a most eminent degree that *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which St.* Peter says, *is in the sight of God of so great price:* So that there was not the least appearance either of Pride or Passion in any of his words or actions. He was not only free from anger and bitterness, but from all affected gravity and morosenefs. His conversation was affable and pleasant; he had a wonderful serenity of mind and evenness of temper, visible in his very countenance; he was hardly ever merry, but never melancholy and sad; and for any thing I could discern, after a long and intimate acquaintance with him, he was upon all occasions and accidents perpetually the same; always cheerful, and always kind;

 of

of a diſpoſition ready to embrace and oblige all men; allowing others to differ from him, even in opinions that were very dear to him; and provided men did but *fear God and work Righteouſneſs*, he lov'd them heartily, how diſtant ſoever from him in judgment about things leſs neceſſary; In all which he is very worthy to be a pattern for men of all Perſwaſions whatſoever.

But that Vertue which of all other ſhone brighteſt in him, and was his moſt proper and peculiar character, was his cheerful and unwearied diligence in acts of pious Charity. In this he left far behind him all that ever I knew, and, as I ſaid before, had a ſingular ſagacity and prudence in deviſing the moſt effectual ways of doing good, and in managing and diſpoſing his charity to the beſt purpoſes, and to the greateſt extent; always if it were poſſible, making it to ſerve ſome end of Piety and Religion; as the inſtructions of poor children in the Principles of Religion, and furniſhing grown perſons that were ignorant with the *Bible* and other Books; ſtrictly obliging thoſe to whom he gave them to a diligent reading of them, and when he had opportunity exacting of them an account how they had profited by them.

In his occaſional Alms to the poor, in which he was very free and bountiful, the relief he gave them was always mingled with good counſel, and as great a tenderneſs and compaſſion for their ſouls as bodies: which very often attain'd the good effect it was likely to have, the one making way for the other with ſo much advantage, and men being very apt to follow the good advice of thoſe, who give them in hand ſo ſenſible a pledge and teſtimony of their good will to them.

This kind of charity muſt needs be very expenſive to him, but he had a plentiful eſtate ſettled upon him, and left him by his Father, and he laid it out as liberally in the moſt prudent and effectual ways of Charity he could think of, and upon ſuch perſons as, all circumſtances conſider'd, he judg'd to be the fitteſt and moſt proper objects of it.

For about nine or ten years laſt paſt he did, as is well known to many here preſent, almoſt wholly apply his charity to *Wales*; becauſe there he judg'd was moſt occaſion for it: And becauſe this was a very great work, he did not only lay out upon it whatever he could ſpare out of his own eſtate, but employ'd his whole time and pains to excite and engage the charity of others for his aſſiſtance in it.

And in this he had two excellent deſigns. One, to have poor children brought up to read and write, and to be carefully inſtructed in the Principles of Religion: The other, to furniſh perſons of grown Age, the poor eſpecially, with the neceſſary helps and means of knowledge, as the Bible, and other Books of piety and devotion, in their own Language; to which end he procur'd the *Church Catechiſm*, the *Practice of Piety*, and that beſt of Books the *Whole Duty of Man*, beſides ſeveral other pious and uſeful *Treatiſes*, ſome of them to be tranſlated into the *Welch* Tongue, and great numbers of all them to be printed, and ſent down to the chief Towns in *Wales*, to be ſold at eaſy rates to thoſe that were able to buy them, and to be freely given to thoſe that were not.

And in both theſe deſigns, through the bleſſing of God upon his unwearied endeavours, he found very great ſucceſs. For by the large and bountiful contributions which chiefly by his induſtry and prudent application were obtain'd from charitable Perſons of all Ranks and Conditions, from the *Nobility* and *Gentry of Wales* and the neighbouring *Counties*, and ſeveral of that Quality in and about *London*; from divers of the Right Reverend

Biſhops,

Bishops, and of the Clergy; and from that perpetual fountain of charity the City of *London*, led on and encourag'd by the most bountiful example of the Right honourable the *Lord Mayor* and the *Court of Aldermen*; to all which he constantly added two Thirds of his own estate, which as I have been credibly inform'd was two hundred pounds a year; I say, by all these together there were every year *eight hundred*, sometimes a *thousand* poor children educated as I said before; and by this example several of the most considerable *Towns* of *Wales* were excited to bring up at their own charge the like number of poor children, in the like manner, and under his inspection and care.

He likewise gave very great numbers of the Books above mention'd both in the *Welch* and *English* Tongues to the poorer sort, so many as were unable to buy them, and willing to read them. But which was the greatest work of all, and amounted indeed to a mighty charge, he procured a new and very fair Impression of the Bible and Liturgy of the Church of *England* in the *Welch* Tongue (the former Impression being spent, and hardly twenty of them to be had in all *London*,) to the number of eight thousand; one thousand whereof were freely given to the poor, and the rest sent to the principal Cities and Towns in *Wales* to be sold to the rich at very reasonable and low rates, *viz.* at *four shillings* apiece well bound and clasped; which was much cheaper than any *English* Bible was ever sold that was of so fair a print and paper: A work of that charge, that it was not likely to have been done any other way; And for which this Age, and perhaps the next, will have great cause to thank God on his behalf.

In these good works he imployed all his time and care and pains, and his whole heart was in them; so that he was very little affected with any thing else, and seldom either minded or knew any thing of the strange occurrences of this troublesome and busie Age, such as I think are hardly to be parallel'd in any other. Or if he did mind them, he scarce ever spoke any thing about them. For this was the business he laid to heart, and knowing it to be so much and so certainly the Will of his heavenly Father, it was his meat and drink to be doing of it: and the good success he had in it was a continual feast to him, and gave him a perpetual serenity both of mind and countenance. His great love and zeal for this work made all the pains and difficulties of it seem nothing to him: He would rise early and sit up late, and continued the same diligence and industry to the last, though he was in the threescore and seventeenth year of his Age. And that he might manage the distribution of this great charity with his own hands, and see the good effect of it with his own eyes, he always once, but usually twice a year, at his own charge travelled over a great part of *Wales*, none of the best Countries to travel in: But for the love of God and men he endured all that, together with the extremity of heat and cold (which in their several seasons are both very great there) not only with patience but with pleasure. So that all things considered there have not, since the primitive times of Christianity, been many among the sons of men to whom that glorious character of the Son of God might be better applied, that *he went about doing good.* And *Wales* may as worthily boast of this truly Apostolical man, as of their famous St. *David*; who was also very probably a good man, as those times of ignorance and superstition went. But his goodness is so disguised by their fabulous *Legends* and stories which give us the account of him, that it is not easie to discover it. Indeed ridiculous miracles in abundance are reported of him; as, that upon occasion of a great number of people resorting from all parts to hear

him

him preach, for the greater advantage of his being heard, a mountain all on a sudden rose up miraculously under his feet, and his voice was extended to that degree that he might be distinctly heard for two or three miles round about. Such phantastical miracles as these make up a great part of his History. And admitting all these to be true (which a wise man would be loath to do) our departed Friend had that which is much greater and more excellent than all these, a fervent charity to God and men; which is more than to *speak* (as they would make us believe St. *David* did) *with the tongue of men and Angels*, more than to raise or remove mountains.

And now methinks it is pity so good a design so happily prosecuted should fall and die with this good man. And it is now under deliberation, if possible, still to continue and carry it on, and a very worthy and charitable person pitched upon for that purpose, who is willing to undertake that part which he that is gone performed so well: But this will depend upon the continuance of the former Charities and the concurrence of those worthy and well-disposed persons in *Wales* to contribute their part as formerly; which I perswade my self they will cheerfully do. I will add but one thing more concerning our deceased Brother, that though he medled not at all in our present heats and differences as a Party, having much better things to mind; yet as a looker on he did very sadly lament them, and for several of the last years of his life he continued in the Communion of our Church, and, as he himself told me, thought himself oblig'd in conscience so to do.

He died in the 77th year of his Age, *Octob.* 29*th*, 1681. It so pleased God that his death was very sudden; and so sudden, that in all probability he himself hardly perceived it when it happened, for he died in his sleep; so that we may say of him, as it is said of *David*, *after he had served his generation according to the will of God*, he fell asleep.

I confess that a sudden death is generally undesirable, and therefore with reason we pray against it; because so very few are sufficiently prepared for it: But to him the constant employment of whose life was the best preparation for death that was possible, no death could be sudden; nay, it was rather a favour and blessing to him, because by how much the more sudden so much the more easie: As if God had designed to begin the reward of the great pains of his life in an easie death. And indeed it was rather a translation than a death; and, saving that his body was left behind, what was said of *Enoch* may not unfitly be applied to this pious and good man with respect to the suddenness of his change; *he walked with God, and was not, for God took him.*

And God grant that we who survive may all of us sincerely endeavour to tread in the steps of his exemplary piety and charity; of his labour of love, his unwearied diligence and patient continuance in doing good, that we may meet with that encouraging commendation which he hath already received from the mouth of our Lord, *Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

Now the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you always that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; To whom be glory for ever. Amen.

A SER-

SERMON XXIV.

Preached at the Funeral of the Reverend *Benjamin Whichcot*, D. D. May 24*th*, 1683.

2 Cor. V. 6.

Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.



Hese Words contain one of the chief grounds of encouragement which the Christian Religion gives us against the fear of death. For our clearer understanding of them it will be requisite to consider the *Context*, looking back as far as the beginning of the *Chapter*; where the *Apostle* pursues the argument of the foregoing *Chapter*; which was to comfort and encourage Christians under their afflictions and sufferings from this consideration, that these did but prepare the way for a greater and more glorious reward; *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And suppose the worst, that these sufferings should extend to death, there is comfort for us likewise in this case, *ver.* 1. of this *Chapter, For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God,* &c. *If our earthly house of this tabernacle*; he calls our body an *earthly house*, and that we may not look upon it as a certain abode and fixed habitation, he doth by way of correction of himself add, that it is but a *tabernacle* or tent which must shortly be taken down: And when it is, *we shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* This is a description of our heavenly habitation, in opposition to our earthly house or tabernacle: It is *a building of God*, not like those houses or tabernacles which men build, and which are liable to decay and dissolution, to be taken down, or to fall down of themselves, for such are those houses of clay which we dwell in, *whose foundations are in the dust*, but an habitation prepared by God himself, *a house not made with hands*; that which is the immediate work of God being in Scripture opposed to that which is made with hands and effected by humane concurrence, and by natural means: And being the immediate work of God, as it is excellent, so it is lasting and durable, which no earthly thing is: *eternal in the heavens*, that is, eternal and heavenly.

For in this we groan earnestly; that is, while we are in this body we groan by reason of the pressures and aflictions of it. *Desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. Desiring to be clothed upon*; that is, we could wish not to put off these bodies, not to be strip'd of them by death, but to be of the number of those who at the coming of our Lord without the putting off these bodies shall be changed and clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, and

without dying be invested with those spiritual and glorious and heavenly bodies which men shall have at the Resurrection.

This I doubt not is the *Apostle*'s meaning in these words; in which he speaks according to a common opinion among the Disciples grounded (as St. *John* tells us) upon a mistake of our *Saviour*'s words concerning him, *If I will that he tarry till I come*: upon which St. *John* tells us, that *there went a Saying among the Brethren, that that disciple should not die*; that is, that he should live till Christ's coming to Judgment, and then be changed; and consequently that Christ would come to Judgment before the end of that Age. Suitable to this common opinion among Christians, the *Apostle* here says, *in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.* It hath puzzled *Interpreters* what to make of this passage, and well it might; for whatever be meant by being clothed, how can they that are clothed be found naked? but I think it is very clear that our *Translators* have not attained the true Sense of this passage, Εἴ γε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι, οὐ γυμνοὶ εὑρεθησόμεθα, which is most naturally rendred thus, *If so be we shall be found clothed, and not naked:* That is, if the coming of Christ shall find us in the body and not devested of it; if at Christ's coming to Judgment we shall be found alive and not dead. And then the sense of the whole is very clear and current; we are desirous to be clothed upon with our house from heaven (that is, with our spiritual and immortal bodies) if so be it shall so happen that at the coming of Christ we shall be found alive in these bodies, and not stripp'd of them before by death. And then it follows, *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burthened* (that is, with the afflictions and pressures of this life) *not that we would be unclothed* (that is, not that we desire by death to be devested of these bodies) *but clothed upon* (that is, if God see it good we had rather be found alive, and changed, and without putting off these bodies have immortality as it were superinduced) *that so mortality might be swallowed up of life.* The plain sense is, that he rather desires (if it may be) to be of the number of those who shall be found alive at the coming of Christ, and have this mortal and corruptible body while they are clothed with it, changed into a spiritual and incorruptible body, without the pain and terrour of dying: of which immediate translation into heaven without the painful divorce of soul and body by death, *Enoch* and *Elias* were examples in the old Testament.

It follows, *ver.* 5. *Now he that hath wrought for us the self-same thing is God:* That is, it is he who hath fitted and prepared us for this Glorious change: *who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.* The spirit is frequently in Scripture called the *witness* and *seal* and *earnest* of our future happiness and blessed Resurrection or change of these vile and earthly bodies into spiritual and heavenly bodies. For as the resurrection of Christ from the dead by the power of the holy Ghost is the great proof and evidence of immortality: so the spirit of him that raised up *Jesus* from the dead dwelling in us is the pledge and earnest of our Resurrection to an immortal life.

From all which the *Apostle* concludes in the words of the *Text*, *Therefore we are always confident*, that is, we are always of good courage against the fear of death, *knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord*, ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνδημοῦντες which may better be rendred *whilst we converse* or *sojourn in the body*, than *whilst we are at home*; Because the design of the *Apostle* is to shew that the body is not our house but our tabernacle; and that whilst we are in the body we are not at home, but pilgrims and strangers. And this notion the *Heathens* had of our present life and condition in this world. *Ex vita discedo* (saith *Tully*) *tanquam ex hospitio non*

tanquam

tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura diversorium nobis, non habitandi locum dedit. We go out of this life as it were from an Inn, and not from our home; nature having designed it to us as a place to sojourn but not to dwell in.

We are absent from the Lord; that is, we are detained from the blessed sight and enjoyment of God, and kept out of the possession of that happiness which makes Heaven.

So that the *Apostle* makes an immediate opposition between our continuance in the body, and our blissful enjoyment of God; and lays it down for a certain truth, that whilst we remain in the body we are detained from our happiness, and that so soon as ever we leave the body we shall be admitted into it, *knowing, that whilst we converse in the body we are absent from the Lord.* And *ver.* 8. *we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord*; intimating that so soon as we quit these bodies we shall be admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of God.

My design from this *Text* is to draw some useful *Corollaries* or Conclusions from this Assertion of the *Apostle, That whilst we are in these bodies we are detained from our happiness; and that so soon as ever we depart out of them we shall be admitted to the possession and enjoyment of it.* And they are these,

1. This Assertion shews us the vanity and falshood of that Opinion, or rather dream, concerning the sleep of the soul from the time of death till the general Resurrection. This is chiefly grounded upon that frequent Metaphor in Scripture by which death is resembled to sleep, and those that are dead are said to be fallen asleep. But this Metaphor is no where in Scripture, that I know of, applied to the soul but to the body resting in the grave in order to its being awakened and raised up at the Resurrection. And thus it is frequently used with express reference to the body, *Dan.* 12. 2. *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Matth.* 27. 52. *And the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose,* Acts 13. 36. *David after he had served his own generation by the will of God fell on sleep, and was laid to his fathers and saw corruption*; which surely can no otherwise be understood than of his body, 1 *Cor.* 5. 21. *Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept*, that is, the resurrection of of his body is the earnest and assurance that ours also shall be raised. And *ver.* 51. *We shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed*; where the *Apostle* certainly speaks both of the death and change of these corruptible bodies. 1 *Thessal.* 4. 14. *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him*: That is, the bodies of those that died in the Lord shall be raised, and accompany him at his coming. So that it is the body which is said in Scripture to sleep, and not the Soul. For that is utterly inconsistent with the *Apostle's* Assertion here in the *Text*, that *while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord*, and that so soon as we depart out of the body we shall be present with the Lord. For surely *to be with the Lord* must signifie a state of happiness, which sleep is not, but only of inactivity: Besides, that the *Apostle's* Argument would be very flat, and it would be but a cold encouragement against the fear of death, that so soon as we are dead we shall fall asleep and become insensible. But the *Apostle* useth it is an Argument why we should be willing to die as soon as God pleaseth, and the sooner the better, because so soon as we quit these bodies we shall be present with the Lord, that is, admitted to the blissful sight and

enjoyment of him: and while we abide in the body we are detained from our happiness: But if our souls shall sleep as well as our bodies till the general Resurrection, it is all one whether we continue in the body or not, as to any happiness we shall enjoy in the mean time; which is directly contrary to the main scope of the *Apostle's* Argument.

2. This Assertion of the *Apostle's* doth perfectly conclude against the feigned Purgatory of the Church of *Rome*; which supposeth the far greater number of true and faithful Christians, of those who dye in the Lord, and have obtained eternal redemption by him from hell not to pass immediately into a state of happiness, but to be detain'd in the suburbs of Hell in extremity of torment (equal to that of hell for degree, though not for duration) till their souls be purged, and the guilt of temporal punishments, which they are liable to, be some way or other paid off and discharged. They suppose indeed some very few holy persons (especially those who suffer Martyrdom) to be so perfect at their departure out of the body as to pass immediately into Heaven, because they need no purgation: But most Christians they suppose to dye so imperfect that they stand in need of being purged; and according to the degree of their imperfection are to be detain'd a shorter or a longer time in Purgatory.

But now, besides that there is no *Text* in *Scripture* from whence any such state can probably be concluded (as is acknowledged by many learned men of the Church of *Rome*) and even that *Text* which they have most insisted upon (*they shall be saved, yet so as by fire*) is given up by them as insufficient to conclude the thing. *Estius* is very glad to get off it, by saying there is nothing in it against Purgatory: why? no body pretends that, but we might reasonably expect that there should be something for it in a *Text* which hath been so often produced and urged by them for the proof of it. I say, besides that there is nothing in Scripture for Purgatory, there are a great many things against it, and utterly inconsistent with it. In the parable of the *Rich man* and *Lazarus*, which was designed to represent to us the different states of good and bad men in another world, there is not the least intimation of Purgatory, but that good men pass immediately into a state of happiness, and bad men into a place of torment. And St. *John*, *Rev.* 14. 13. pronounceth all that die in the Lord happy, because *they rest from their labours*; which they cannot be said to do who are in a state of great anguish and torment, as those are supposed to be who are in Purgatory.

But above all, this Reasoning of Saint *Paul* is utterly inconsistent with any imagination of such a state. For he encourageth all Christians in general against the fear of death from the consideration of that happy state they should immediately pass into, by being admitted into the presence of God; which surely is not Purgatory. *We are of good courage* (says he) *and willing rather to be absent from the body*: And great reason we should be so, if so soon as we leave the body we are present with the Lord. But no man sure would be glad to leave the body to go into a place of exquisite and extream torment, which they tell us is the case of most Christians when they die. And what can be more unreasonable, than to make the *Apostle* to use an Argument to comfort all Christians against the fear of death which concerns but very few in comparison? So that if the *Apostle's* reasoning be good, that while we are in this life we are detained from our happiness, and so soon as we depart this life we pass immediately into it, and therefore death is desirable to all good men: I say if this reasoning be good, it is very clear that St. *Paul* knew nothing of the Doctrine now taught in the Church of

Rome concerning Purgatory; becaufe that is utterly inconfiftent with what he exprefly afferts in this *Chapter*; and quite takes away the force of his whole Argument.

3. To encourage us againft the fear of death. And this is the Conclufion which the *Apoftle* makes from this confideration. *Therefore* (fays he) *we are of good courage, knowing that whilft we converfe in the body we are abfent from the Lord.* There is in us a natural love of life, and a natural horrour and dread of death; fo that our Spirits are apt to fhrink at the thoughts of the approach of it. But this fear may very much be mitigated, and even overruled by Reafon and the confiderations of Religion. For death is not fo dreadful in it felf, as with regard to the confequences of it: And thofe will be as we are, comfortable and happy to the good, but difmal and miferable to the wicked. So that the only true antidote againft the fear of death is the hopes of a better life; and the only firm ground of thefe hopes is the mercy of God in *Jefus Chrift*, upon our due preparation for another world by repentance and a holy life. For the fting of death is fin; and when that is taken away the terrour and bitternefs of death is paft: And then death is fo far from being dreadful, that in reafon it is extreamly defirable; becaufe it lets us into a better ftate, fuch as only deferves the name of life. *Hi vivunt qui ex corporum vinculis tanquam e carcere evolaverunt: veftra vero quæ dicitur vita, mors eft. They truly live* (could a *Heathen* fay) *who have made their efcape out of this prifon of the body; but that which men commonly call life is rather death than life.* To live indeed, is to be well, and to be happy; and that we fhall never be till we are got beyond the grave.

4. This Confideration fhould comfort us under the lofs and death of Friends, which certainly is one of the greateft grievances and troubles of humane life. For if they be fit for God, and go to him when they die, they are infinitely happier than it was poffible for them to have been in this world; and the trouble of their abfence from us is fully balanced by their being prefent with the Lord. For why fhould we lament the end of that life which we are affured is the beginning of immortality? One reafon of our trouble for the lofs of Friends is becaufe we loved them: But it is no fign of our love to them to grudge and repine at their happinefs. But we hoped to have enjoyed them longer: Be it fo; yet why fhould we be troubled that they are happy fooner than we expected? But they are parted from us, and the thought of this is grievous: But yet the confideration of their being parted for a while is not near fo fad, as the hopes of a happy meeting again, never to be parted any more, is comfortable and joyful. So that the greater our love to them was, the lefs fhould be our grief for them, when we confider that they are happy, and that they are fafe; paft all ftorms, all the troubles and temptations of this life, and out of the reach of all harm and danger for ever. But though the Reafon of our duty in this cafe be very plain, yet the practice of it is very difficult; and when all is faid, natural affection will have its courfe: And even after our Judgment is fatisfied, it will require fome time to ftill and quiet our Paffions.

5. This confideration fhould wean us from the love of life; and make us not only contented, but willing and glad to leave this world, whenever it fhall pleafe God to call us out of it. This Inference the *Apoftle* makes, *ver.* 8. *We are confident, I fay, and willing rather to be abfent from the body, and prefent with the Lord.* Though there were no ftate of immortality after this

life, yet methinks we ſhould not deſire to live always in this world. *Habet natura* (ſays *Tully*) *ut aliarum rerum, ſic vivendi modum*: *As nature hath ſet bounds and meaſures to other things, ſo likewiſe to life*; of which men ſhould know when they have enough, and not covet ſo much of it till they be tired and cloyed with it. If there were no other inconvenience in a long life, this is a great one, that in a long courſe of time we unavoidably ſee a great many things which we would not; our own misfortunes and the calamities of others; publick confuſions and diſtractions; the loſs of Friends and Relations; or which is worſe, their miſery, or which is worſt of all, their miſcarriage: Eſpecially, a very infirm and tedious old age is very undeſirable: For who would deſire to live long uneaſie to himſelf, and troubleſome to others? It is time for us to be willing to die, when we cannot live with the good will even of our friends: when thoſe who ought to love us beſt think much that we live ſo long, and can hardly forbear to give us broad ſigns that they are weary of our company. In ſuch a caſe a man would almoſt be contented to dye out of civility; and not chuſe to make any long ſtay where he ſees that his company is not acceptable. If we think we can be welcome to a better place, and to a more delightful ſociety, why ſhould we deſire to thruſt our ſelves any longer upon an ill-natur'd world, upon thoſe who have much ado to refrain from telling us that our room is better than our company?

Some indeed have a very happy and vigorous old age, and the taper of life burns clear in them to the laſt: Their underſtandings are good, their memories and ſenſes tolerable, their humour pleaſant, and their converſation acceptable, and their Relations kind and reſpectful to them. But this is a rare felicity, and which ſeldom happens but to thoſe who have lived wiſely and vertuouſly, and by a religious and regular courſe of life have preſerved ſome of their beſt ſpirits to the laſt, and have not by vice and extravagance drawn off life to the dregs, and left nothing to be enjoyed but infirmities and ill humours, guilt and repentance: But on the contrary have prudently laid up ſome conſiderable comforts and ſupports for themſelves againſt this gloomy day; having ſtored their minds with wiſdom and knowledge, and taken care to ſecure to themſelves the comfortable reflections of an uſeful and well-ſpent life, and the favour and loving kindneſs of God which is better than life it ſelf. But generally the extremities of old age are very peeviſh and querulous, and a declining and falling back to the weak and helpleſs condition of Infancy and Childhood. And yet leſs care is commonly taken to pleaſe aged perſons, and leſs kindneſs ſhewed to them (unleſs it be in expectation of receiving greater from them) than to Children: becauſe theſe are cheriſhed in hopes, the others in deſpair of their growing better. So that if God ſee it good it is not deſirable to live to try nature, and the kindneſs and good will of our Relations to the utmoſt.

Nay there is reaſon enough why we ſhould be well contented to dye in any Age of our life. If we are young, we have taſted the beſt of it: If in our middle Age, we have not only enjoyed all that is deſirable of life, but almoſt all that is tolerable: If we are old, we are come to the dregs of it, and do but ſee the ſame things over and over again, and continually with leſs pleaſure.

Eſpecially if we conſider the happineſs from which we are all this while detained. This life is but our Infancy and Childhood in compariſon of the manly pleaſures and employments of the other ſtate. And why ſhould we deſire to be always children; and to linger here below to play the fools yet a little longer? In this ſenſe that high expreſſion of the *Poet* is true,

.....*Dii*

——Dii celant homines, ut vivere durent,
Quàm ſit dulce mori.——

The Gods conceal from men the ſweetneſs of dying, to make them patient and contented to live.

This life is wholly in order to the other. Do but make ſure to live well, and there is no need of living long. To the purpoſe of preparation for another world, the beſt life is the longeſt. Some live a great pace, and by continual diligence and induſtry in ſerving God and doing good, do really diſpatch more of the buſineſs of life in a few years, than others do in a whole Age; who go ſuch a ſantring pace towards Heaven, as if they were in no haſte to get thither. But if we were always prepared we ſhould rejoyce at the proſpect of our end; as thoſe who have been long toſt at Sea are overjoyed at the ſight of Land.

I have now done with my *Text*, but have another Subject to ſpeak of; that excellent Man in whoſe Place I now ſtand; whom we all knew, and whom all that knew him well did highly eſteem and reverence. He was born in *Shropſhire* of a worthy and ancient Family, the 11*th* of *March* 1609. was the ſixth Son of his Father: and being bred up to learning, and very capable of it, was ſent to the Univerſity of *Cambridge*, and planted there in *Emanuel* College, where he was choſen Fellow, and was an excellent Tutour and Inſtructour of Youth, and bred up many perſons of Quality, and others who afterwards proved uſeful and eminent; as many perhaps as any Tutour of that Time.

About the age of four or five and thirty he was made Provoſt of *King's* College; where he was a moſt vigilant and prudent Governour, a great encourager of Learning and good Order, and by his careful and wiſe management of the Eſtate of the College, brought it into a very flouriſhing Condition, and left it ſo.

It cannot be denied (nor am I much concerned to diſſemble it) that here he poſſeſs'd another man's place, who by the iniquity of the times was wrongfully ejected; I mean Dr. *Collins* the famous and learned Divinity-Profeſſour of that Univerſity. During whoſe Life (and he lived many years after) by the free conſent of the College there were two ſhares out of the common Dividend allotted to the Provoſt, one whereof was conſtantly paid to Dr. *Collins*, as if he had been ſtill Provoſt. To this Dr. *Whichcot* did not only give his conſent (without which the thing could not have been done) but was very forward for the doing of it, tho' hereby he did not only conſiderably leſſen his own profit, but likewiſe incur no ſmall cenſure and hazard as the Times then were. And leſt this had not been kindneſs enough to that worthy Perſon, whoſe Place he poſſeſſed, in his laſt Will he left to his Son, Sir *John Collins*, a Legacy of one hundred Pounds.

And as he was not wanting either in reſpect or real kindneſs to the rightful Owner, ſo neither did he ſtoop to do any thing unworthy to obtain that Place; for he never took the *Covenant*: And not only ſo, but by the particular friendſhip and intereſt which he had in ſome of the chief of the *Viſitors*, he prevailed to have the greateſt part of the Fellows of that College exempted from that Impoſition; and preſerved them in their Places by that means. And to the Fellows that were ejected by the *Viſitors*, he likewiſe freely conſented that their full Dividend for that year ſhould be paid them, even after they were ejected. Among theſe was the Reverend and ingenious Dr.

Charles

Charles Mason; upon whom after he was ejected, the College did confer a good Living which then fell in their gift, with the consent of the Provost, who, knowing him to be a worthy man, was contented to run the hazard of the displeasure of those Times.

So that I hope none will be hard upon him, that he was contented upon such terms to be in a capacity to do good in bad Times.

For, besides his care of the College, he had a very great and good influence upon the University in general. Every Lord's Day in the Afternoon, for almost twenty years together, he preached in *Trinity* Church, where he had a great number, not only of the young Scholars, but of those of greater standing and best repute for Learning in the University his constant and attentive Auditors: And in those wild and unsettled Times contributed more to the forming of the Students of that University to a sober sense of Religion than any man in that Age.

After he left *Cambridge* he came to *London*, and was chosen Minister of *Black Friars*, where he continued till the dreadful Fire; and then retired himself to a Donative he had at *Milton* near *Cambridge*; where he preached constantly, and relieved the poor, and had their Children taught to read at his own charge; and made up differences among the Neighbours. Here he stayed till by the promotion of the Reverend Dr. *Wilkins*, his Predecessor in this Place, to the Bishoprick of *Chester*, he was by his interest and recommendation presented to this Church. But during the building of it, upon the invitation of the Court of Aldermen, in the Mayoralty of Sir *William Turner*, he preached before that Honourable Auditory at *Guild-Hall* Chappel every Sunday in the Afternoon with great acceptance and approbation, for about the space of seven years.

When his Church was built, he bestowed his pains here twice a week, where he had the general love and respect of his Parish; and a very considerable and judicious Auditory, though not very numerous by reason of the weakness of his voice in his declining age.

It pleased God to bless him, as with a plentiful Estate, so with a charitable Mind: Which yet was not so well known to many, because in the disposal of his charity he very much affected secresy. He frequently bestowed his Alms (as I am informed by those who best knew) on poor house-keepers disabled by age or sickness to support themselves, thinking those to be the most proper objects of it. He was rather frugal in expence upon himself, that so he might have wherewithal to relieve the necessities of others.

And he was not only charitable in his life, but in a very bountiful manner at his death; bequeathing in pious and charitable Legacies to the value of a thousand pounds. To the Library of the University of *Cambridge* fifty pounds: and of *King's College* one hundred pounds: and of *Emanuel* College twenty pounds: to which College he had been a considerable Benefactor before; having founded there several Scholarships to the value of a thousand pounds, out of a Charity with the disposal whereof he was intrusted, and which not without great difficulty and pains he at last recovered.

To the Poor of the several places where his Estate lay, and where he had been Minister, he gave above one hundred pounds.

Among those who had been his Servants, or were so at his death, he disposed in Annuities and Legacies in money to the value of above three hundred pounds.

To other charitable uses and among the poorer of his Relations, above three hundred pounds.

To

To every one of his Tenants he left a Legacy according to the proportion of the Estate they held, by way of remembrance of him: and to one of them that was gone much behind he remitted in his Will seventy pounds. And as became his great goodness, he was ever a remarkably kind Landlord, forgiving his Tenants, and always making abatements to them for hard years or any other accidental losses that happened to them.

I must not omit the wise provision he made in his Will to prevent Law-suits among the Lagatees, by appointing two or three persons of greatest prudence and Authority among his Relations final Arbitrators of all differences that should arise.

Having given this account of his last Will, I come now to the sad part of all: sad I mean to us, but happiest to him. A little before *Easter* last he went down to *Cambridge*: where, upon taking a great Cold, he fell into a distemper which in a few days put a period to his life. He died in the house of his ancient and most learned Friend, Dr. *Cudworth*, Master of *Christ's* College. During his sickness he had a constant calmness and serenity of mind: and under all his bodily weakness possest his Soul in great patience. After the Prayers for the Visitation of the Sick (which he said were excellent Prayers) had been used, he was put in mind of receiving the Sacrament; to which he answered, that he most readily embraced the proposal: And after he had received it, said to Dr. *Cudworth*, I heartily thank you for this most Christian office: I thank you for putting me in mind of receiving this Sacrament; adding this pious ejaculation, *The Lord fulfill all his declarations and promises, and pardon all my weaknesses and imperfections.* He disclaimed all merit in himself; and declared that whatever he was, he was through the grace and goodness of God in *Jesus Christ.* He expressed likewise great dislike of the Principles of Separation; and said, *he was the more desirous to receive the Sacrament that he might declare his full Communion with the Church of Christ all the world over.* He disclaimed *Popery*, and, as things of near affinity with it, or rather parts of it, *all superstition and usurpation upon the consciences of men.*

He thanked God, *that he had no pain in his body, nor disquiet in his mind.*

Towards his last he seemed rather unwilling to be detained any longer in this state; not for any pains he felt in himself, but for the trouble he gave his Friends: saying to one of them who had with great care attended him all along in his sickness, *My dear Friend, thou hast taken a great deal of pains to uphold a crazy body, but it will not do: I pray thee give me no more Cordials; for why shouldest thou keep me any longer out of that happy state to which I am going? I thank God I hope in his mercy, that it shall be well with me.*

And herein God was pleased particularly to answer those devout and well-weighed petitions of his which he frequently used in his Prayer before Sermon, which I shall set down in his own words, and I doubt not those that were his constant hearers do well remember them; *And superadd this, O Lord, to all the grace and favour which thou hast shewn us all along in life, not to remove us hence but with all advantage for Eternity, when we shall be in a due preparation of mind, in a holy constitution of Soul, in a perfect renunciation of the guise of this mad and sinful world, when we shall be intirely resigned up to thee, when we shall have clear acts of faith in God by Jesus Christ, high and reverential thoughts of thee in our minds, inlarged and inflamed affections towards thee, &c. And whensoever we shall come to leave this world, which will be when thou shalt appoint (for the issues of life and death are in thy hands) afford us such a mighty power and presence of thy good Spirit, that we may have solid consolation in believing, and avoid all consternation*

nation of mind, all doubtfulness and uncertainty concerning our everlasting condition, and at length depart in the Faith of God's Elect, &c. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.

Thus you have the short History of the life and death of this eminent Person; whose just Character cannot be given in few words, and time will not allow me to use many. To be able to describe him aright it were necessary one should be like him: for which reason I must content my self with a very imperfect draught of him.

I shall not insist upon his exemplary piety and devotion towards God, of which his whole life was one continued Testimony. Nor will I praise his profound Learning, for which he was justly had in so great reputation. The moral improvements of his mind, *a God-like temper and disposition* (as he was wont to call it) he chiefly valued and aspired after; that universal charity and goodness, which he did continually preach and practise.

His Conversation was exceeding kind and affable, grave and winning, prudent and profitable. He was slow to declare his judgment, and modest in delivering it. Never passionate, never peremptory: so far from imposing upon others, that he was rather apt to yield. And though he had a most profound and well poized judgment, yet was he of all men I ever knew the most patient to hear others differ from him, and the most easie to be convinced when good Reason was offered; and, which is seldom seen, more apt to be favourable to another man's Reason than his own.

Studious and inquisitive men commonly at such an age (at forty or fifty at the utmost) have fixed and settled their Judgments in most Points, and as it were made their *last Understanding*; supposing they have thought, or read, or heard what can be said on all sides of things; and after that, they grow positive and impatient of contradiction, thinking it a disparagement to them to alter their judgment: But our deceased Friend was so wise, as to be willing to learn to the last; knowing that no man can grow wiser without some change of his mind, without gaining some knowledge which he had not, or correcting some error which he had before.

He had attained so perfect a mastery of his Passions, that for the latter and greatest part of his life he was hardly ever seen to be transported with Anger: and as he was extreamly careful not to provoke any man, so not to be provoked by any; using to say, *if I provoke a man he is the worse for my company, and if I suffer my self to be provoked by him I shall be the worse for his.*

He very seldom reproved any person in company otherwise than by silence, or some sign of uneasiness, or some very soft and gentle word; which yet from the respect men generally bore to him did often prove effectual. For he understood humane nature very well, and how to apply himself to it in the most easie and effectual ways.

He was a great encourager and kind director of young Divines: and one of the most candid hearers of Sermons, I think, that ever was: So that though all men did mightily reverence his Judgment, yet no man had reason to fear his Censure. He never spake well of himself, nor ill of others: making good that saying of *Pansa* in *Tully*, *Neminem alterius, qui sua confideret virtuti, invidere*; that *no man is apt to envy the worth and vertues of another, that hath any of his own to trust to.*

In a word, he had all those vertues, and in a high degree, which an excellent temper, great consideration, long care and watchfulness over himself, together with the assistance of God's grace (which he continually implored, and mightily relied upon) are apt to produce. Particularly he excelled in the vertues of Conversation, humanity, and gentleness, and humility, a

prudent

prudent and peaceable and reconciling temper. And God knows we could very ill at this time have spared such a Man; and have lost from among us as it were so much balm for the healing of the Nation, which is now so miserably rent and torn by those wounds which we madly give our selves. But since God hath thought good to deprive us of him, let his vertues live in our memory, and his example in our lives. Let us endeavour to be what he was, and we shall one day be what he now is, of blessed memory on Earth; and happy for ever in Heaven.

And now methinks the consideration of the Argument I have been upon, and of that great example that is before us should raise our minds above this world, and fix them upon the glory and happiness of the other. Let us then begin heaven here, in the frame and temper of our minds, in our heavenly affections and conversation; in a due preparation for, and in earnest desires and breathings after that blessed state which we firmly believe and assuredly hope to be one day possessed of: when we shall be removed out of this sink of sin and sorrows into the Regions of bliss and immortality: where we shall meet all those worthy and excellent persons who are gone before us, and whose conversation was so delightful to us in this world; and will be much more so to us in the other, when the spirits of just men shall be made perfect, and shall be quit of all those infirmities which did attend and lessen them in this mortal state; when we shall meet again with our dear Brother, and all those good men whom we knew in this world, and with the Saints and excellent persons of all Ages to enjoy their blessed friendship and society for ever, in the presence of the blessed God where is *fulness of joy, at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

In a firm perswasion of this happy state let us every one of us say with *David*, and with the same ardency of affection that he did, *As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; O when shall I come and appear before God;* that so the life which we now live in this world may be a *patient continuance in well-doing* in a joyful *expectation of the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*: To whom with the Father and the holy Ghost be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

Now the God of Peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will; working in us always that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

A Perſuaſive to frequent Communion.

1 Cor. xi. 26, 27, 28.

For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come.

Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord

But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.



MY deſign in this Argument is, from the conſideration of the Nature of this Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, and of the perpetual Uſe of it to the end of the world, to awaken men to a ſenſe of their duty, and the great obligation which lies upon them to the more frequent receiving of it. And there is the greater need to make men ſenſible of their duty in this particular, becauſe in this laſt Age by the unwary diſcourſe of ſome concerning the nature of this Sacrament and the danger of receiving it unworthily, ſuch doubts and fears have been raiſed in the minds of men as utterly to deter many, and in a great meaſure to diſcourage almoſt the generality of Chriſtians from the uſe of it; to the great prejudice and danger of men's ſouls, and the viſible abatement of Piety by the groſs neglect of ſo excellent a means of our growth and improvement in it; and to the mighty Scandal of our Religion, by the general diſuſe and contempt of ſo plain and ſolemn an Inſtitution of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour.

Therefore I ſhall take occaſion as briefly and clearly as I can to treat of theſe *four* Points.

Firſt, Of the *Perpetuity* of this Inſtitution; this the Apoſtle ſignifies when he ſaith, that *by eating this Bread, and drinking this Cup, we do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come.*

Secondly, Of the *Obligation* that lies upon all Chriſtians to a frequent obſervance of this Inſtitution; this is ſignified in that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, *as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup:* which expreſſion conſidered and compared together with the practice of the Primitive Church, does imply an Obligation upon Chriſtians to the frequent receiving of this Sacrament.

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfie the *Objections* and Scruples which have been raiſed in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and ſincere Chriſtians, to their great diſcouragement from their receiving this Sacrament, at leaſt ſo frequently as they ought: which Objections are chiefly grounded upon

upon what the Apostle says, *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord: and doth eat and drink damnation to himself.*

Fourthly, What *Preparation* of our selves is necessary in order to our worthy receiving of this Sacrament: which will give me occasion to explain the Apostle's meaning in those Words, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.*

I. For the *Perpetuity* of this Institution, implied in those Words, *For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's Death till he come*; or the words may be read *imperatively* and by way of Precept, *shew ye forth the Lord's Death till he come.* In the three *verses* immediately before, the Apostle particularly declares the Institution of this Sacrament, with the manner and circumstances of it, as he had received it not only by the hands of the Apostles, but, as the words seem rather to intimate, by immediate Revelation from our Lord himself, *ver.* 23. *For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus in the same night that he was betrayed took Bread, and when he had given Thanks he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the Cup when he had supped, saying, this Cup is the New Testament in my Blood: this do as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me.* So that the Institution is in these Words, *this do in remembrance of me.* In which words our Lord commands his Disciples after his Death to repeat these occasions of *taking* and *breaking* and *eating the Bread*, and of *drinking of the Cup*, by way of solemn Commemoration of him. Now whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftner; and whether by the Disciples only, during their lives or by all Christians afterwards in all successive Ages of the Church, is not so certain meerly from the force of these Words, *do this in remembrance of me*: but what the Apostle adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the Institution of this Sacrament was intended, not only for the Apostles, and for that Age, but for all Christians, and for all Ages of the Christian Church; *For as often as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come*: that is, until the time of his second coming, which will be at the end of the world. So that this Sacrament was designed to be a standing Commemoration of the Death and Passion of our Lord till he should come to Judgment; and consequently the Obligation that lies upon Christians to the observation of it is perpetual, and shall never cease to the end of the World.

So that it is a vain conceit and meer dream of the *Enthusiasts* concerning the *seculum Spiritùs Sancti*, *the Age* and dispensation *of the Holy Ghost*, when as they suppose, all human Teaching shall cease, and all external Ordinances and Institutions in Religion shall vanish, and there shall be no farther use of them. Whereas it is very plain from the *New Testament* that Prayer, and outward Teaching, and the Use of the two Sacraments, were intended to continue among Christians in all Ages. As for *Prayer*, (besides our natural Obligation to this duty, if there were no revealed Religion) we are by our Saviour particularly exhorted to *watch and pray* with regard to the day of Judgment, and in consideration of the uncertainty of the time when it shall be: And therefore this will always be a Duty incumbent upon Christians till the day of Judgment, because it is prescribed as one of the best ways of Preparation for it. That *outward Teaching* likewise and *Baptism* were intended to be perpetual is no less plain, because Christ hath expresly promised to be with the Teachers of his Church in the use of these Ordinances to the end of the World, *Matth.* 28. 19, 20. *Go and disciple all Nations, baptizing them in*

the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt : and lo I am with you always to the end of the World. Not only to the end of that particular Age, but to the end of the Goſpel-Age, and the conſummation of all Ages, as the phraſe clearly imports. And it is as plain from this *Text*, that the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* was intended for a perpetual Inſtitution in the Chriſtian Church, till the ſecond coming of Chriſt, *viz.* his coming to Judgment: Becauſe St. *Paul* tells us, that by theſe Sacramental Signs the Death of Chriſt is to be repreſented and commemorated till he comes. *Do this in remembrance of me: For as oft as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come.*

And if this be the End and Uſe of this Sacrament, to be a ſolemn remembrance of the Death and Sufferings of our Lord during his abſence from us, that is, till his coming to Judgment, then this Sacrament will never be out of date till the ſecond coming of our Lord. The conſideration whereof ſhould mightily ſtrengthen and encourage our Faith in the hope of Eternal Life ſo often as we partake of this Sacrament: ſince our Lord hath left it to us as a memorial of himſelf till he come to tranſlate his Church into Heaven, and as a ſure pledge that he will come again at the end of the World and inveſt us in that Glory which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the Table of the Lord, we ſhould comfort our ſelves with the thoughts of that bleſſed time when we ſhall eat and drink with him in his Kingdom, and ſhall be admitted to the great Feaſt of the Lamb, and to eternal Communion with God the Judge of all, and with our bleſſed and glorified Redeemer, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits of juſt men made perfect.

And the ſame conſideration ſhould likewiſe make us afraid to receive this Sacrament unworthily, without due Preparation for it and without worthy effects of it upon our Hearts and Lives. Becauſe of that dreadful Sentence of condemnation which at the ſecond coming of our Lord ſhall be paſt upon thoſe, who by the profanation of this ſolemn Inſtitution trample under foot the Son of God, and contemn the Blood of the Covenant; that Covenant of Grace and Mercy which God hath ratified with Mankind by the Blood of his Son. The Apoſtle tells us that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord,* and *eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf.* This indeed is ſpoken of temporal Judgment (as I ſhall ſhew in the latter part of this Diſcourſe,) but the Apoſtle likewiſe ſuppoſeth, that if theſe temporal Judgments had not their effect to bring men to Repentançe, but they ſtill perſiſted in the Profanation of this holy Sacrament, they ſhould at laſt *be condemned with the World.* For as he that partaketh worthily of this Sacrament confirms his intereſt in the promiſes of the Goſpel, and his Title to eternal Life; ſo he that receives this Sacrament unworthily, that is without due Reverence, and without fruits meet for it; nay, on the contrary, continues to live in ſin whilſt he commemorates the Death of Chriſt, *who gave himſelf for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,* this man aggravates and ſeals his own Damnation, becauſe he is guilty of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, not only by the contempt of it, but by renewing in ſome ſort the cauſe of his ſufferings, and as it were *crucifying to himſelf afreſh the Lord of life and glory, and putting him to an open ſhame.* And when the great Judge of the world ſhall appear and paſs final Sentence upon men, ſuch obſtinate and impenitent wretches as could not be wrought upon by the remembrance of the deareſt love of their dying Lord, nor be engaged to leave their ſins by all the tyes and obligations of this holy Sacrament, ſhall have their portion with *Pilate* and *Judas,* with the *chief Prieſts* and *Soldiers,* who were the betrayers and murtherers of the Lord of life and glory; and ſhall be dealt withal

as those who are in some sort *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* Which severe threatning ought not to discourage men from the Sacrament, but to deter all those from their sins who think of engaging themselves to God by so solemn and holy a Covenant. It is by no means a sufficient Reason to make men fly from the Sacrament, but certainly one of the most powerful Arguments in the world to make men forsake their sins; as I shall shew more fully under the *third* head of this Discourse.

II. The *Obligation* that lies upon all Christians to the frequent observance and practice of this Institution. For though it be not necessarily implied in these Words, *as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup*; yet if we compare these Words of the *Apostle*, with the usage and practice of Christians at that time, which was to communicate in this holy Sacrament so often as they solemnly met together to worship God, they plainly suppose and recommend to us the frequent use of this Sacrament, or rather imply an obligation upon Christians to embrace all opportunities of receiving it. For the sense and meaning of any Law or Institution is best understood by the general practice which follows immediately upon it. II.

And to convince men of their obligation hereunto, and to engage them to a suitable practice, I shall now endeavour with all the plainness and force of perswasion I can: And so much the more, because the neglect of it among Christians is grown so general, and a great many persons from a superstitious awe and reverence of this Sacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I shall briefly mention a *threefold* Obligation lying upon all Christians to frequent Communion in this holy Sacrament; each of them sufficient of it self, but all of them together of the greatest force imaginable to engage us hereunto.

1. We are oblig'd in point of *indispensable duty*, and in obedience to a plain precept and most solemn institution of our blessed Saviour that great *Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy, as* St. *James* calls him: He hath bid us *do this.* And St. *Paul* who declares nothing in this matter but what he tells us he *received from the Lord,* admonisheth us to do it *often.* Now for any man that professeth himself a Christian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain Law and Institution of *Christ* is utterly inconsistent with such a profession. To such our Lord may say as he did to the *Jews, Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* How far the Ignorance of this Institution, or the mistakes which men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect is another consideration. But after we know our Lord's will in this particular and have the Law plainly laid before us, there is no cloak for our sin. For nothing can excuse the wilful neglect of a plain Institution from a downright contempt of our Saviour's Authority.

2. We are likewise obliged hereunto in point of *Interest.* The benefits which we expect to be derived and assured to us by this Sacrament are all the blessings of the New Covenant, the forgiveness of our sins, the grace and assistance of God's holy Spirit to enable us to perform the conditions of this Covenant required on our part; and the comforts of God's holy Spirit to encourage us in well-doing, and to support us under sufferings; and the glorious reward of eternal life. So that in neglecting this Sacrament we neglect our own interest and happiness, we forsake our own mercies, and judge our selves unworthy of all the blessings of the Gospel, and deprive our selves of one of the

the best means and advantages of confirming and conveying these blessings to us. So that if we had not a due sense of our *duty*, the consideration of our own *interest* should oblige us not to neglect so excellent and so effectual a means of promoting our own comfort and happiness.

3. We are likewise particularly obliged in point of *gratitude* to the careful observance of this Institution. This was the particular thing our Lord gave in charge when he was going to lay down his life for us, *do this in remembrance of me*. Men use religiously to observe the charge of a dying friend, and, unless it be very difficult and unreasonable, to do what he desires: But this is the charge of our best friend (nay of the greatest friend and benefactor of all mankind) when he was preparing himself to die in our stead and to offer up himself a Sacrifice for us; to undergo the most grievous pains and sufferings for our sakes, and to yield up himself to the worst of temporal deaths that he might deliver us from the bitter pains of eternal death. And can we deny him any thing he asks of us who was going to do all this for us? Can we deny him this? so little grievous and burthensome in it self, so infinitely beneficial to us? Had such a friend, and in such circumstances, bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? how much more when he hath only said, *do this in remembrance of me*; when he hath only commended to us one of the most natural and delightful Actions, as a fit representation and memorial of his wonderful love to us, and of his cruel sufferings for our sakes; when he hath only enjoyned us, in a thankful commemoration of his goodness, to meet at his Table and to remember what he hath done for us, to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to resolve to grieve and wound him no more? Can we without the most horrible ingratitude neglect this dying charge of our Sovereign and our Saviour, the great friend and lover of souls; A command so reasonable, so easie, so full of blessings and benefits to the faithful observers of it!

One would think it were no difficult matter to convince men of their duty in this particular, and of the necessity of observing so plain an Institution of our Lord; that it were no hard thing to perswade men to their interest, and to be willing to partake of those great and manifold blessings which all Christians believe to be promised and made good to the frequent and worthy Receivers of this Sacrament. Where then lies the difficulty? what should be the cause of all this backwardness which we see in men to so plain, so necessary, and so beneficial a duty? The truth is, men have been greatly discouraged from this Sacrament by the unwary pressing and inculcating of two great truths; *the danger of the unworthy receiving of this holy Sacrament, and the necessity of a due preparation for it.* Which brings me to the

III. III. *Third* Particular I proposed, which was to endeavour to satisfie the *Objections* and *Scruples* which have been raised in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and sincere Christians, to their great discouragement from the receiving of this Sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought. And these Objections, I told you, are chiefly grounded upon what the *Apostle* says at the *27th verse*. *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* And again *ver. 29. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* Upon the mistake and misapplication of these *Texts* have been grounded *two* Objections, of great force to discourage men from this Sacrament, which I shall endeavour with all the tenderness and clearness I can to remove. *First*, That the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way not to receive at all. *Secondly*, That so

so much preparation and worthiness being required in order to our worthy Receiving, the more timorous sort of devout Christians can never think themselves duly enough qualified for so sacred an Action.

1. That the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great it seems the safest way wholly to refrain from this Sacrament, and not to receive it at all. But this Objection is evidently of no force if there be (as most certainly there is) as great or greater danger on the other hand, *viz.* in the neglect of this Duty: And so though the danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the danger of neglecting and contemning a plain Institution of Christ is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the *Parable* that refused to come to the *marriage-feast* of the *King's Son*, and *made light* of that gracious invitation were at least as faulty as he who came without *a wedding garment*. And we find in the conclusion of the *Parable*, that as he was severely punished for his disrespect, so they were destroyed for their disobedience. Nay of the two it is the greater sign of contempt wholly to neglect the Sacrament, than to partake of it without some due qualification. The greatest indisposition that can be for this holy Sacrament is ones being a bad man, and he may be as bad, and is more likely to continue so, who wilfully neglects this Sacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of reverence and preparation, though much less than he ought: And surely it is very hard for men to come to so solemn an Ordinance without some kind of religious awe upon their Spirits, and without some good thoughts and resolutions, at least for the present. If a man that lives in any known wickedness of life do before he receive the Sacrament set himself seriously to be humbled for his sins, and to repent of them, and to beg God's grace and assistance against them; and after the receiving of it, does continue for some time in these good resolutions, though after a while he may possibly relapse into the same sins again; this is some kind of restraint to a wicked life; and these good moods and fits of repentance and reformation are much better than a constant and uninterrupted course of sin: even this *righteousness*, which is but *as the morning cloud and the early dew which so soon passeth away*, is better than none. Object. 1.

And indeed scarce any man can think of coming to the Sacrament, but he will by this consideration be excited to some good purposes, and put upon some sort of endeavour to amend and reform his life: and though he be very much under the bondage and power of evil habits, if he do with any competent degree of sincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make use of this excellent means and instrument for the mortifying and subduing of his lusts and for the obtaining of God's grace and assistance, it may please God by the use of these means so to abate the force and power of his lusts, and to imprint such considerations upon his mind in the receiving of this holy Sacrament and preparing himself for it, that he may at last break off his wicked course and become a good man.

But, on the other hand, as to those who neglect this Sacrament, there is hardly any thing left to restrain them from the greatest enormities of life, and to give a check to them in their evil course: nothing but the penalty of humane Laws, which men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Heretofore men used to be restrained from great and scandalous vices by shame and fear of disgrace, and would abstain from many sins out of regard to their honour and reputation among men: But men have hardened their faces in this degenerate Age, and those gentle restraints of modesty which governed and kept men in order heretofore signifie nothing now adays: Blushing is out of fashion, and shame is ceased from among the Children of men.

But

But the Sacrament did always use to lay some kind of restraint upon the worst of men: and if it did not wholly reform them, it would at least have some good effect upon them for a time: If it did not make men good, yet it would make them resolve to be so, and leave some good thoughts and impressions upon their minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of very bad consequence, to discourage men so much from the Sacrament, as the way hath been of late years: And that many men who were under some kind of check before, since they have been driven away from the Sacrament have quite let loose the reins, and prostituted themselves to all manner of impiety and vice. And among the many ill effects of our past confusions, this is none of the least, That in many Congregations of this Kingdom, Christians were generally disused and deterred from the Sacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit for it: and being so, they must necessarily incur the danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore they had better wholly to abstain from it. By which it came to pass that in very many places this great and solemn Institution of the Christian Religion was almost quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it; and the remembrance of Christ's death even lost among Christians: So that many Congregations in *England* might justly have taken up the complaint of the Woman at our Saviour's Sepulchre, *they have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid him.*

But surely men did not well consider what they did, nor what the consequences of it would be, when they did so earnestly disswade men from the Sacrament. 'Tis true indeed the danger of unworthy receiving is great; but the proper inference and conclusion from hence is not that men should upon this consideration be deterred from the Sacrament, but that they should be affrighted from their sins, and from that wicked course of life which is an habitual indisposition and unworthiness. St. *Paul* indeed (as I observed before) truly represents, and very much aggravates the danger of the unworthy receiving this Sacrament; but he did not deter the *Corinthians* from it, because they had sometimes come to it without due reverence, but exhorts them to amend what had been amiss and to come better prepared and disposed for the future. And therefore after that terrible declaration in the Text, *Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,* he does not add, therefore let Christians take heed of coming to the Sacrament, but, let them come prepared and with due reverence, not as to a common meal, but to a solemn participation of the body and blood of Christ; *but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

For, if this be a good reason to abstain from the Sacrament, for fear of performing so sacred an Action in an undue manner, it were best for a bad man to lay aside all Religion and to give over the exercise of all the duties of piety, of prayer, of reading and hearing the Word of God; because there is a proportionable danger in the unworthy and unprofitable use of any of these. *The prayer of the wicked* (that is, of one that resolves to continue so) *is an abomination to the Lord.* And our *Saviour* gives us the same caution concerning hearing the Word of God; *take heed how you hear.* And St. *Paul* tells [illegible] that those who are not reformed by the Doctrine of the *Gospel,* it is *the* [illegible]*ur of death,* that is, deadly and damnable to such persons.

But now will any man from hence argue, that it is best for a wicked man not to pray, nor to hear or read the Word of God, lest by so doing he should endanger and aggravate his condemnation? And yet there is as much reason from this consideration to perswade men to give over praying and attending

tending to God's Word, as to lay aside the use of the Sacrament. And it is every whit as true that he that prays unworthily and hears the Word of God unworthily, that is, without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great contempt of God and of our blessed Saviour; and by his indevout prayers and unfruitful hearing of God's Word does further and aggravate his own damnation: I say, this is every whit as true, as that he that eats and drinks the Sacrament unworthily is guilty of a high contempt of Christ, and *eats and drinks his own Judgment*; so that the danger of the unworthy performing this so sacred an action, is no otherwise a reason to any man to abstain from the Sacrament, than it is an Argument to him to cast off all Religion. He that unworthily useth or performs any part of Religion is in an evil and dangerous condition; but he that casts off all Religion plungeth himself into a most desperate state, and does certainly damn himself to avoid the danger of damnation: Because he that casts off all Religion throws off all the means whereby he should be reclaimed and brought into a better state. I cannot more fitly illustrate this matter than by this plain Similitude: He that eats and drinks intemperately endangers his health and his life, but he that to avoid this danger will not eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very short space.

There are some conscientious persons who abstain from the Sacrament upon an apprehension that the sins which they shall commit afterwards are unpardonable. But this is a great mistake; our Saviour having so plainly declared that all manner of sin shall be forgiven men except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; such as was that of the *Pharisees*, who as our Saviour tells us blasphemed the Holy Ghost in ascribing those great miracles which they saw him work, and which he really wrought by the spirit of God, to the power of the Devil. Indeed to sin deliberately after so solemn an engagement to the contrary is a great aggravation of sin, but not such as to make it unpardonable. But the neglect of the Sacrament is not the way to prevent these sins; but, on the contrary, the constant receiving of it with the best preparation we can is one of the most effectual means to prevent sin for the future, and to obtain the assistance of God's grace to that end: And if we fall into sin afterwards, we may be renewed by repentance; *for we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins*; and as such, is in a very lively and affecting manner exhibited to us in this blessed Sacrament of his body broken, and his blood shed for the remission of our sins. Can we think that the primitive Christians, who so frequently received this holy Sacrament, did never after the receiving of it fall into any deliberate sin? undoubtedly, many of them did; but far be it from us to think that such sins were unpardonable, and that so many good men should because of their careful and conscientious observance of our Lord's Institution unavoidably fall into condemnation.

To draw to a conclusion of this matter: such groundless fears and jealousies as these may be a sign of a good meaning, but they are certainly a sign of an injudicious mind. For if we stand upon these Scruples, no man perhaps was ever so worthily prepared to draw near to God in any duty of Religion, but there was still some defect or other in the disposition of his [illegible] and the degree of his preparation. But if we prepare our selves as w[illegible] can, this is all God expects. And for our fears of falling into sin afterwards, there is this plain answer to be given to it; that the danger of falling into sin is not prevented by neglecting the Sacrament, but increased: because a powerful and probable means of preserving men from sin is neglected. And why should not every sincere Christian, by the receiving of this Sacrament and re-

newing his Covenant with God, rather hope to be confirmed in goodneſs; and to receive farther aſſiſtances of God's grace and holy Spirit to ſtrengthen him againſt ſin and to enable him to ſubdue it; than trouble himſelf with fears which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no ſufficient reaſon to keep any man from the Sacrament? We cannot ſurely entertain ſo unworthy a thought of God and our bleſſed Saviour, as to imagine that he did inſtitute the Sacrament not for the furtherance of our Salvation, but as a ſnare, and an occaſion of our ruine and damnation. This were to pervert the gracious deſign of God, and to turn the cup of Salvation into a cup of deadly poiſon to the ſouls of men.

All then that can reaſonably be inferred from the danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon this conſideration men ſhould be quickned to come to the Sacrament with a due preparation of mind, and ſo much the more to fortifie their reſolutions of living ſutably to that holy Covenant which they ſolemnly renew every time they receive this holy Sacrament. This conſideration ought to convince us of the abſolute neceſſity of a good life, but not to deter us from the uſe of any means which may contribute to make us good. Therefore (as a learned *Divine* ſays very well) this Sacrament can be neglected by none but thoſe that do not underſtand it, but thoſe who are unwilling to be tyed to their duty, and are afraid of being engaged to uſe their beſt diligence to keep the commandments of Chriſt: And ſuch perſons have no reaſon to fear being in a worſe condition, ſince they are already in ſo bad a ſtate. And thus much may ſuffice for anſwer to the *firſt objection* concerning the great danger of unworthy receiving this holy Sacrament. I proceed to the

Object. 2. *Second Objection*, which was this; That ſo much preparation and worthineſs being required to our worthy receiving, the more timerous ſort of Chriſtians can never think themſelves duly enough qualified for ſo ſacred an Action.

For a full Anſwer to this Objection, I ſhall endeavour briefly to clear theſe *three* things. *Firſt*, That every degree of Imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to refrain from it. *Secondly*, That a total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and ſubſtance of it, though it render us unfit at preſent to receive this Sacrament, yet it does by no means excuſe our neglect of it. *Thirdly*, That the proper Inference and concluſion from the total want of a due preparation is not to caſt off all thoughts of receiving the Sacrament, but immediately to ſet upon the work of Preparation that ſo we may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make out theſe *three* things, I hope this Objection is fully anſwer'd.

1. That every degree of Imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to abſtain from it: For then no man ſhould ever receive it. For who is every way worthy, and in all degrees and reſpects duly qualified to approach the preſence of God in any of the duties of his Worſhip and Service? Who can *waſh his hands in innocency*, that ſo he may be perfectly fit to approach God's Altar? *There is not a man on earth that lives and ſins not.* The Graces of the beſt men are imperfect; and every imperfection in grace and goodneſs is an imperfection in the diſpoſition and preparation of our minds for this holy Sacrament: But if we do heartily repent of our ſins, and ſincerely reſolve to obey and perform the terms of the Goſpel, and of that Covenant which we entred into by Baptiſm, and are going ſolemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this Sacrament, we are at leaſt in ſome degree and in the main qualified to partake of this holy Sacrament; and the way for us to be more fit is to receive this Sacrament

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frequently, that by this spiritual food of God's appointing, by *this living bread which comes down from heaven* our souls may be nourished in goodness, and new strength and vertue may be continually derived to us for the purifying of our hearts and enabling us to run the ways of God's commandments with more constancy and delight. For the way *to grow in grace* and to be *strengthened with all might in the inner man*, and to *abound in all the fruits of righteousness which by Christ Jesus are to the praise and glory of God*, is with care and conscience to use those means which God hath appointed for this end: And if we will neglect the use of these means it is to no purpose for us to pray to God for his grace and assistance. We may tire our selves with our devotions and fill heaven with vain complaints, and yet by all this importunity obtain nothing at God's hand: Like lazy beggars that are always complaining and always asking, but will not work, will do nothing to help themselves and better their condition, and therefore are never like to move the pity and compassion of others. If we expect God's grace and assistance, we must work out our own Salvation in the careful use of all those means which God hath appointed to that end. That excellent degree of goodness which men would have to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but by the use of it. And therefore it is a preposterous thing for men to insist upon having the end before they will use the means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and substance of it, though it render us unfit at present to receive this Sacrament, yet does it by no means excuse our neglect of it. One fault may draw on another, but can never excuse it. It is our great fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead it in excuse or extenuation of this neglect. A total want of preparation and an absolute unworthiness is Impenitency in an evil course, a resolution to continue a bad man, not to quit his lusts and to break off that wicked course he hath lived in: But is this any excuse for the neglect of our duty that we will not fit our selves for the doing of it with benefit and advantage to our selves? A father commands his son to ask him blessing every day, and is ready to give it him; but so long as he is undutiful to him in his other actions, and lives in open disobedience, forbids him to come in his sight. He excuseth himself from asking his father blessing, because he is undutiful in other things, and resolves to continue so. This is just the case of neglecting the duty God requires, and the blessings he offers to us in the Sacrament, because we have made our selves incapable of so performing the one as to receive the other; and are resolved to continue so. We will not do our duty in other things, and then plead that we are unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the Sacrament.

3. The proper Inference and conclusion from a total want of due preparation for the Sacrament is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to set about the work of preparation, that so we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true, that they who are absolutely unprepared ought not to receive the Sacrament, nor can do it with any benefit; nay by doing it in such a manner render their condition much worse, this is a most forcible argument to repentance and amendment of life: There is nothing reasonable in this case but immediately to resolve upon a better course, that so we may be meet partakers of those holy Mysteries, and may no longer provoke God's wrath against us by the wilful neglect of so great and necessary a duty of the Christian Religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, so long as we do wilfully refuse to fit and qualifie our selves for the due and worthy

performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like case; A Pardon is graciously offered to a Rebel, he declines to accept it, and modestly excuseth himself because he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? because he resolves to be a Rebel, and then his pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his crime. Very true: and it will be no less an aggravation that he refuseth it for such a reason, and under a pretence of modesty does the most imprudent thing in the world. This is just the case; and in this case there is but one thing reasonable to be done, and that is, for a man to make himself capable of the benefit as soon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it: but to excuse himself from accepting of the benefit offered, because he is not worthy of it, nor fit for it, nor ever intends to be so, is as if a man should desire to be excused from being happy because he is resolved to play the fool and to be miserable. So that whether our want of preparation be total, or only to some degree, it is every way unreasonable: If it be in the degree only, it ought not to hinder us from receiving the Sacrament; if it be total, it ought to put us immediately upon removing the impediment, by making such preparation as is necessary to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this brings me to the

IV. IV. *Fourth* and last thing I proposed, *viz.* what preparation of our selves is necessary in order to the worthy receiving of this Sacrament. Which I told you would give me occasion to explain the *Apostle's* meaning in the last part of the *Text*, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.* I think it very clear from the occasion and circumstances of the *Apostle's* discourse concerning the Sacrament that he does not intend the examination of our state, whether we be Christians or not, and sincerely resolved to continue so; and consequently that he does not here speak of our habitual preparation by the resolution of a good life. This he takes for granted, that they were Christians and resolved to continue and persevere in their Christian profession: But he speaks of their actual fitness and worthiness at that time when they came to receive the Lord's Supper. And for the clearing of this matter, we must consider what it was that gave occasion to this discourse. At the *20th verse* of this *Chapter* he sharply reproves their irreverent and unsutable carriage at the Lord's Supper. They came to it very disorderly, *one before another*. It was the custom of Christians to meet at their *Feast of Charity*, in which they did communicate with great sobriety and temperance; and when that was ended they celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's supper. Now among the *Corinthians* this order was broken: The rich met and excluded the poor from this common Feast. And after an irregular Feast (one before another eating his own supper as he came) they went to the Sacrament in great disorder; *one was hungry* having eaten nothing at all; *others were drunk*, having eaten intemperately; and the poor were despised and neglected. This the *Apostle* condemns as a great profanation of that solemn Institution of the Sacrament; at the participation whereof they behaved themselves with as little reverence as if they had been met at a common supper or feast. And this he calls *not discerning the Lord's body*, making no difference in their behaviour between the Sacrament and a common meal: which irreverent and contemptuous carriage of theirs he calls *eating and drinking unworthily*: for which he pronounceth them *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, which were represented and commemorated in their *eating of that bread and drinking of that cup*. By which irreverent and contemptuous usage of the Body and Blood of our Lord, he tells them that they did incur the judgment of God; which he calls *eating and drinking their own judgment*. For that the word *κρίμα*, which our *Translators* render *damnation*,

damnation, does not here signifie eternal condemnation, but a temporal judgment and chastisement in order to the prevention of eternal condemnation is evident from what follows; *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself*: And then he says, *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*: that is, for this irreverence of theirs God hath sent among them several diseases, of which many had died. And then he adds, *For if we would judge our selves, we should not be judged. If we would judge our selves*; whether this be meant of the publick Censures of the Church, or our private censuring of our selves in order to our future amendment and reformation, is not certain. If of the latter, which I think most probable, then *judging* here is much the same with *examining our selves*, *v.* 28. And then the *Apostle's* meaning is, that if we would censure and examine our selves, so as to be more careful for the future, we should escape the judgment of God in these temporal punishments. *But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. But when we are judged*; that is, when by neglecting thus to judge our selves we provoke God to judge us; *we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*; that is, he inflicts these temporal judgments upon us to prevent our eternal condemnation. Which plainly shews, that the judgment here spoken of is not eternal condemnation. And then he concludes, *Wherefore, my Brethren, when ye come together to eat tarry for one another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto judgment*: where the *Apostle* plainly shews both what was the crime of unworthy receiving, and the punishment of it. Their crime was, their irreverent and disorderly participation of the Sacrament; and their punishment was, those temporal judgments which God inflicted upon them for this their contempt of the Sacrament.

Now this being, I think, very plain; we are proportionably to understand the precept of examination of our selves *before we eat of that bread and drink of that cup. But let a man examine himself*; that is, consider well with himself what a sacred Action he is going about, and what behaviour becomes him when he is celebrating this Sacrament instituted by our Lord in memorial of his body and blood, that is, of his death and passion: And if heretofore he have been guilty of any disorder and irreverence (such as the *Apostle* here taxeth them withal) let him censure and *judge himself* for it, be sensible of and sorry for his fault, and be careful to avoid it for the future; and having thus *examined himself, let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*. This, I think, is the plain sense of the *Apostle's* Discourse; and that if we attend to the scope and circumstances of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But some will say, Is this all the preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the Sacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any irreverence and disorder in the celebration of it? I answer in short, this was the particular unworthiness with which the *Apostle* taxeth the *Corinthians*; and which he warns them to amend, as they desire to escape the judgments of God, such as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, so unsutable to the holy Sacrament: He finds no other fault with them at present in this matter, though any other sort of irreverence will proportionably expose men to the like punishment. He says nothing here of their habitual preparation, by the sincere purpose and resolution of a good life answerable to the rules of the Christian Religion: This we may suppose he took for granted. However, it concerns the Sacrament no more than it does Prayer or any other religious duty. Not but that it is very true that none but those who do heartily embrace the Christian Religion and are sincerely resolved to frame their lives according to the holy rules and

and precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this solemn acknowledgment and profession of it. So that it is a practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged, because it is of great use, for Christians by way of preparation for the Sacrament to examine themselves in a larger sense than in all probability the *Apostle* here intended: I mean, to examine our past lives and the actions of them in order to a sincere repentance of all our errors and miscarriages, and to fix us in the steady purpose and resolution of a better life: particularly, when we expect to have the forgiveness of our sins sealed to us, we should lay aside all enmity and thoughts of revenge, and heartily forgive those that have offended us, and put in practice that universal love and charity which is represented to us by this holy Communion. And to this purpose we are earnestly exhorted in the publick *Office* of the *Communion* by way of due preparation and disposition for it, to *repent us truly of our sins past, to amend our lives, and to be in perfect charity with all men, that so we may be meet partakers of those holy Mysteries.*

And because this work of examining our selves concerning our state and condition, and of exercising repentance towards God and charity towards men is incumbent upon us as we are Christians, and can never be put in practice more seasonably and with greater advantage than when we are medi-ditating of this Sacrament, therefore besides our habitual preparation by repentance and the constant endeavours of a holy life, it is a very pious and commendable custom in Christians before their coming to the Sacrament to set apart some particular time for this work of examination. But how much time every person should allot to this purpose is matter of prudence; and as it need not, so neither indeed can it be precisely determined. Some have greater reason to spend more time upon this work than others; I mean those whose accounts are heavier, because they have long run upon the score and neglected themselves: And some also have more leisure and freedom for it, by reason of their easie condition and circumstances in the world; and therefore are obliged to allow a greater portion of Time for the exercises of piety and devotion. In general, no man ought to do a work of so great moment and concernment slightly and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other actions, the end is principally to be regarded. Now the end of examining our selves is to understand our state and condition, and to reform whatever we find amiss in our selves. And provided this end be obtained, the circumstances of the means are less considerable: whether more or less time be allowed to this work, it matters not so much, as to make sure that the work be throughly done.

And I do on purpose speak thus cautiously in this matter, because some pious persons do perhaps err on the stricter hand, and are a little superstitious on that side; insomuch that unless they can gain so much time to set apart for a solemn preparation, they will refrain from the Sacrament at that time; though otherwise they be habitually prepared. This I doubt not proceeds from a pious mind; but as the *Apostle* says in another case about the Sacrament, *shall I praise them in this? I praise them not.* For, provided there be no wilful neglect of due preparation, it is much better to come so prepared as we can, nay I think it is our duty so to do, rather than to abstain upon this *punctilio*. For when all is done, the best preparation for the Sacrament is the general care and endeavour of a good life: And he that is thus prepared may receive at any time when opportunity is offered, though he had no particular foresight of that opportunity. And I think in that case such a one shall do much better to receive than to refrain; because he is habitually prepared for the Sacrament, though he had no time to make such actual preparation as he desired. And if this were not allowable, how could Ministers

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communicate with ſick perſons at all times, or perſwade others to do it many times upon very ſhort and ſudden warning?

And indeed we cannot imagine that the Primitive Chriſtians, who received the Sacrament ſo frequently that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it as eſſential and neceſſary a part of their publick worſhip as any other part of it whatſoever, even as their Hymns and Prayers, and reading and interpreting the Word of God: I ſay, we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated it ſo conſtantly, could allot any more time for a ſolemn preparation for it, than they did for any other part of divine worſhip: And conſequently, that the *Apoſtle* when he bids the *Corinthians* examine themſelves could mean no more than that conſidering the nature and ends of this Inſtitution they ſhould come to it with great reverence; and reflecting upon their former miſcarriages in this matter, ſhould be careful upon his admonition to avoid them for the future and to amend what had been amiſs: which to do, requires rather reſolution and care than any long time of preparation.

I ſpeak this, that devout perſons may not be intangled in an apprehenſion of a greater neceſſity than really there is of a long and ſolemn preparation every time they receive the Sacrament. The great neceſſity that lies upon men is to live as becomes Chriſtians, and then they can never be abſolutely unprepared. Nay, I think this to be a very good preparation; and I ſee not why men ſhould not be very well ſatisfied with it, unleſs they intend to make the ſame uſe of the Sacrament that many of the Papiſts do of Confeſſion and Abſolution, which is to quit with God once or twice a year, that ſo they may begin to ſin again upon a new ſcore.

But becauſe the Examination of our ſelves is a thing ſo very uſeful, and the time which men are wont to ſet apart for their preparation for the Sacrament is ſo advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it; therefore I cannot but very much commend thoſe who take this occaſion to ſearch and try their ways, and to call themſelves to a more ſolemn account of their actions. Becauſe this ought to be done ſometime, and I know no fitter time for it than this. And perhaps ſome would never find time to recollect themſelves and to take the condition of their ſouls into ſerious conſideration, were it not upon this ſolemn occaſion.

The ſumm of what I have ſaid is this, that ſuppoſing a perſon to be habitually prepared by a religious diſpoſition of mind and the general courſe of a good life, this more ſolemn actual preparation is not always neceſſary: And it is better when there is an opportunity to receive without it, than not to receive at all. But the greater our actual preparation is, the better. For no man can examine himſelf too often, and underſtand the ſtate of his ſoul too well, and exerciſe repentance, and renew the reſolutions of a good life too frequently. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all this, than when we approach the Lord's table, there to commemorate his death, and to renew our Covenant with him to live as becomes the Goſpel.

All the Reflection I ſhall now make upon this Diſcourſe, ſhall be from the conſideration of what hath been ſaid earneſtly to excite all that profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians to a due preparation of themſelves for this holy Sacrament, and a frequent participation of it according to the intention of our Lord and Saviour in the inſtitution of it, and the undoubted practice of Chriſtians in the primitive and beſt Times, when men had more devotion and fewer ſcruples about their duty.

If we do in good earneſt believe that this Sacrament was inſtituted by our Lord in remembrance of his dying love, we cannot but have a very high value and eſteem for it upon that account. Methinks ſo often as we read

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in the inſtitution of it thoſe words of our dear Lord, *do this in remembrance of me*, and conſider what he who ſaid them did for us, this dying charge of our beſt friend ſhould ſtick with us and make a ſtrong impreſſion upon our minds: Eſpecially if we add to theſe, thoſe other words of his, not long before his death, *Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend; ye are my friends if ye do whatſoever I command you.* It is a wonderful love which he hath expreſſed to us, and worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. And all that he expects from us, by way of thankful acknowledgment, is to celebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent participation of this bleſſed Sacrament. And ſhall this charge, laid upon us by him who laid down his life for us, lay no obligation upon us to the ſolemn remembrance of that unparallel'd kindneſs which is the fountain of ſo many bleſſings and benefits to us? It is a ſign we have no great ſenſe of the benefit when we are ſo unmindful of our benefactor as to forget him days without number. The Obligation he hath laid upon us is ſo vaſtly great, not only beyond all requital but beyond all expreſſion, that if he had commanded us ſome very grievous thing we ought with all the readineſs and chearfulneſs in the world to have done it; how much more when he hath impoſed upon us ſo eaſie a commandment, a thing of no burthen but of immenſe benefit? when he hath only ſaid to us, *Eat O friends, and drink O beloved?* when he only invites us to his table, to the beſt and moſt delicious Feaſt that we can partake of on this ſide heaven?

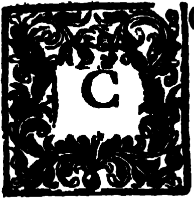
If we ſeriouſly believe the great bleſſings which are there exhibited to us and ready to be conferred upon us, we ſhould be ſo far from neglecting them, that we ſhould heartily thank God for every opportunity he offers to us of being made partakers of ſuch benefits. When ſuch a price is put into our hands, ſhall we want hearts to make uſe of it? Methinks we ſhould long with *David* (who ſaw but a ſhadow of theſe bleſſings) to be ſatisfied with the good things of God's houſe, and to draw near his altar; and ſhould cry out with him, *O when ſhall I come and appear before thee! My ſoul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, and my fleſh cryeth out for the living God.* And if we had a juſt eſteem of things, we ſhould account it the greateſt infelicity and judgment in the world to be debarred of this privilege, which yet we do deliberately and frequently deprive our ſelves of.

We exclaim againſt the Church of *Rome* with great impatience, and with a very juſt indignation, for robbing the People of half of this bleſſed Sacrament, and taking from them the *cup of bleſſing, the cup of ſalvation*; and yet we can patiently endure for ſome months, nay years, to exclude our ſelves wholly from it. If no ſuch great benefits and bleſſings belong to it, why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? But if there do, why do we by our own neglect deprive our ſelves of the whole?

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our graces and our ſlow progreſs and improvement in Chriſtianity, whilſt we wilfully deſpiſe the beſt means of our growth in goodneſs. Well do we deſerve that God ſhould ſend leanneſs into our ſouls, and make them to conſume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when God himſelf doth ſpread ſo bountiful a Table for us and ſet before us the bread of life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulneſs.

SERMON XXVI.

A Discourse against Transubstantiation.



Oncerning the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, one of the two great positive Institutions of the Christian Religion, there are two main Points of difference between *Us* and the Church of *Rome*. *One*, about the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; in which they think, but are not certain, that they have the Scripture and the words of our Saviour on their side: The *other*, about the administration of this Sacrament to the People in both kinds; in which we are sure that we have the Scripture and our Saviour's Institution on our side; and that so plainly that our Adversaries themselves do not deny it.

Of the *first* of these I shall now treat, and endeavour to shew against the Church of *Rome*, *That in this Sacrament, there is no substantial change made of the Elements of Bread and Wine into the natural Body and Blood of Christ; that Body* which was born of the *Virgin Mary*, and suffered upon the Cross; for so they explain that hard word *Transubstantiation*.

Before I engage in this Argument, I cannot but observe what an unreasonable task we are put upon, by the bold confidence of our Adversaries, to dispute a matter of Sense; which is one of those things about which *Aristotle* hath long since pronounced there ought to be no dispute.

It might well seem strange if any man should write a Book, to prove that an *Egg* is not an *Elephant*, and that a *Musket-bullet* is not a *Pike*: It is every whit as hard a case, to be put to maintain by a long Discourse, that what we see and handle and taste to be *Bread*, *is Bread*, and not the *Body of a man*; and what we see and taste to be *Wine*, *is Wine*, and not *Blood*: And if this evidence may not pass for sufficient without any farther proof, I do not see why any man, that hath confidence enough to do so, may not deny any thing to be what all the World sees it is; or affirm any thing to be what all the World sees it is not: and this without all possibility of being farther confuted. So that the business of *Transubstantiation* is not a controversie of Scripture against Scripture, or of Reason against Reason, but of downright Impudence against the plain meaning of Scripture, and all the Sense and Reason of Mankind.

It is a most Self-evident Falshood; and there is no Doctrine or Proposition in the World that is of it self more evidently true, than *Transubstantiation* is evidently false: And yet if it were possible to be true, it would be the most ill-natured and pernicious truth in the World, because it would suffer nothing else to be true; it is like the *Roman Catholick* Church, which will needs be the whole Christian Church, and will allow no other Society of Christians to be any part of it: So *Transubstantiation*, if it be true at all, it is all truth, and nothing else is true; for it cannot be true unless our Senses, and the Senses of all mankind be deceived about their proper objects; and if this be true and certain, then nothing else can be so; for if we be not certain of what we see, we can be certain of nothing.

And yet notwithstanding all this, there are a Company of men in the world so abandon'd and given up by God to the efficacy of delusion as in good earnest to believe this gross and palpable Errour, and to impose the belief of it upon the Christian World under no less penalties than of temporal death and

and eternal damnation. And therefore to undeceive, if possible, these deluded Souls, it will be necessary to examine the pretended grounds of so false a Doctrine, and to lay open the monstrous absurdity of it.

And in the handling of this Argument, I shall proceed in this plain method.

I. I shall consider the pretended grounds and reasons of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine.

II. I shall produce our *Objections* against *it*. And if I can shew that there is no tolerable ground for it, and that there are invincible Objections against it, then every man is not only in reason excused from believing this Doctrine, but hath great cause to believe the contrary.

I. FIRST, I will consider the pretended grounds and reasons of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine. Which must be one or more of these *five*. Either *1st*. The Authority of Scripture. Or *2ly*. The perpetual belief of this Doctrine in the Christian Church, as an evidence that they always understood and interpreted our Saviour's words, *This is my body*, in this sense. Or *3ly*. The Authority of the present Church to make and declare new Articles of Faith Or *4ly*. The absolute necessity of such a change as this in the Sacrament to the comfort and benefit of those who receive this Sacrament. Or *5ly*. To magnifie the power of the Priest in being able to work so great a Miracle.

1st. They pretend for this Doctrine the Authority of Scripture in those words of our Saviour. *This is my body*. Now to shew the insufficiency of this pretence, I shall endeavour to make good these *two* things.

1. That there is no necessity of understanding those words of our Saviour in the sense of *Transubstantiation*.

2. That there is a great deal of reason, nay that it is very absurd and unreasonable, to understand them otherwise.

First, that there is no necessity to understand those words of our Saviour in the sense of *Transubstantiation*. If there be any, it must be from one of these two reasons. Either because there are no figurative expressions in Scripture, which I think no man ever yet said : or else, because a Sacrament admits of no figures; which would be very absurd for any man to say , since it is of the very nature of a Sacrament to represent and exhibit some invisible grace and benefit by an outward sign and figure : And especially, since it cannot be denied, but that in the institution of this very Sacrament our Saviour useth figurative expressions, and several words which cannot be taken strictly and literally. When he gave the Cup he said, *This Cup is the new Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of Sins.* Where first, the *Cup* is put for the *Wine* contained in the Cup ; or else if the words be literally taken, so as to signifie a substantial change, it is not of the *Wine*, but of the *Cup* ; and that, not into the *blood of Christ* but into the *new Testament* or *new Covenant* in his blood. Besides, that his blood is said *then* to be shed, and his body to be broken, which was not till his Passion, which followed the Institution and first Celebration of this Sacrament.

But that there is no necessity to understand our Saviour's words in the sense of *Transubstantiation*, I will take the plain concession of a great number of the most learned Writers of the Church of *Rome* in this Controversie. (a) *Bellarmine*, (b) *Suarez* and (c) *Vasquez* do acknowledge *Scotus* the great *Schoolman* to have said that this Doctrine cannot be evidently proved from Scripture : And *Bellarmine* grants this not to be improbable ; and *Suarez* and *Vasquez* acknowledge (d) *Durandus* to have said as much. (e) *O-cham*

(a) *de Euch.* l. 3. c. 23.
(b) *in 3 d. s.* 49. Qu. 75. Sect. 2
(c) *in 3. part disp.* 180. Qu. 75. *art.* 2. c. 15.
(d) *in Sent.* l. 4. *dist.* 11 Qu. 1. *n.* 15.
(e) *in 4. Sent.* Q. 5. & *Quodl.* 4. Q. 3.

cham another famous Schoolman, says expresly, that *the Doctrine which holds the substance of the Bread and Wine to remain after consecration is neither repugnant to Reason nor to Scripture.* (f) *Petrus ab Alliaco* Cardinal of *Cambray* says plainly, that *the Doctrine of the Substance of Bread and Wine remaining after Consecration is more easie and free from absurdity, more rational, and no ways repugnant to the authority of Scripture*; nay more, that for the other Doctrine, *viz.* of *Transubstantiation, there is no evidence in Scripture.* (g) *Gabriel Biel,* another great Schoolman and divine of their Church, freely declares, that *as to any thing exprest in the Canon of the Scriptures, a man may believe that the substance of Bread and Wine doth remain after Consecration*: and therefore he resolves the belief of *Transubstantiation* into some other Revelation, besides Scripture, which he supposeth the Church had about it. Cardinal (h) *Cajetan* confesseth that *the Gospel doth now here express that the Bread is changed into the Body of Christ*; *that we have this from the authority of the Church*: nay, he goes farther, *that there is nothing in the Gospel which enforceth any man to understand these words of Christ,* this is my body, *in a proper and not in a metaphorical sense*; *but the Church having understood them in a proper sense they are to be so explained*: Which words in the *Roman* Edition of *Cajetan* are expunged by order of Pope (i) *Pius* V. Cardinal (k) *Contarenus,* and (l) *Melchior Canus* one of the best and most judicious Writers that Church ever had, reckon this Doctrine among those *which are not so expresly found in Scripture.* I will add but one more of great authority in the Church, and a reputed Martyr, (m) *Fisher* Bishop of *Rochester* who ingenuously confesseth that in the words of the Institution *there is not one word from whence the true presence of the flesh and blood of Christ in our Mass can be proved*: So that we need not much contend that this Doctrine hath no certain foundation in Scripture, when this is so fully and frankly acknowledged by our Adversaries themselves.

Secondly, If there be no necessity of understanding our Saviour's words in the sense of *Transubstantiation,* I am sure there is a great deal of reason to understand them otherwise. Whether we consider the like expressions in Scripture; as where our Saviour says he is *the door* and *the true Vine* (which the Church of *Rome* would mightily have triumph'd in, had it been said, *this is my true body.*) And so likewise where the Church is said to be *Christ's body*; and the *Rock* which followed the *Israelites* to be *Christ,* 1 *Cor.* 10. 4. *They drank of that Rock which followed them,* and *that Rock was Christ*: All which and innumerable more like expressions in Scripture every man understands in a figurative, and not in a strictly literal and absurd sense. And it is very well known, that in the *Hebrew* Language things are commonly said to be that which they do signifie and represent; and there is not in that Language a more proper and usual way of expressing a thing to signifie so and so, than to say that it is so and so. Thus *Joseph* expounding *Pharoah*'s dream to him, *Gen.* 41. 26. says, *the seven good kine are seven years,* and *the seven good ears of corn are seven years,* that is, they signified or represented seven years of plenty; and so *Pharoah* understood him, and so would any man of sense understand the like expressions; nor do I believe that any sensible man who had never heard of *Transubstantiation* being grounded upon these words of our Saviour, *this is my body,* would upon reading the Institution of the Sacrament in the Gospel ever have imagin'd any such thing to be meant by our Saviour in those words; but would have understood his meaning to have been *this Bread* signifies my *Body,* this *Cup* signifies my *Blood*; and this which you see me now do, do ye hereafter for a *Memorial* of me: But surely it would never have entred into any man's mind to have thought that our Saviour did literally hold himself in his hand, and give away himself from himself with his

(f) *in* 4 *Sent.* Q. 6 *art.* 2.

(g) *in canon Miss. Lect.* 40.

(h) *in Aquin* 3. *part.* Qu. 75. *art.* 1

(i) *Ægid. Conick. de Sacram.* Q. 75. *art.* 1 *n.*

(k) *de Sacram. l.* 2. *c.* 3.

(l) *Loc. Theolog. l.* 3. *c.* 3.

(m) *contra captiv Babylon c.* 10 *n.* 2.

his own hands. Or whether we compare these words of our Saviour with the ancient Form of the Passover used by the *Jews* from *Ezra*'s time, as (*n*) *Justin Martyr* tells us, τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ καταφυγὴ ἡμῶν, *this Passover is our Saviour and our refuge*: not that they believed the Paschal Lamb to be substantially changed either into God their Saviour who delivered them out of the Land of *Egypt*, or into the *Messias* the Saviour whom they expected and who was signified by it: But this Lamb which they did eat did represent to them and put them in mind of that Salvation which God wrought for their Fathers in *Egypt*, when by the slaying of a Lamb and sprinkling the blood of it upon their doors their first-born were passed over and spared; and did likewise foreshew the Salvation of the *Messias*, *the Lamb of God that was to take away the Sins of the world*.

(*n*) Dial. p. 297. Ed. Paris. 1639.

And nothing is more common in all Languages than to give the name of the thing signified to the Sign, as the delivery of a Deed or Writing under Hand and Seal is call'd a conveyance or making over of such an Estate, and it is really so; not the delivery of meer wax and parchment, but the conveyance of a real Estate, as truly and really to all effects and purposes of Law, as if the very material houses and lands themselves could be and were actually delivered into my hands: In like manner the names of the things themselves made over to us in the new Covenant of the Gospel between God and man, are given to the Signs or Seals of that Covenant. By *Baptism* Christians are said to be *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, *Heb.* 6. 4. And by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper we are said to *communicate* or to be made partakers *of the Body of Christ* which was broken, and of his *Blood* which was shed for us, that is, of the real benefits of his death and passion. And thus St. *Paul* speaks of this Sacrament, 1 *Cor.* 10. 16. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the body of Christ?* But still it is bread, and he still calls it so; v. 17. *For we being many are one bread and one body*; *for we are partakers of that one bread*. The Church of *Rome* might, if they pleased, as well argue from hence that all Christians are substantially changed first into Bread, and then into the natural Body of Christ by their participation of the Sacrament, because they are said thereby to be *one bread and one body*. And the same Apostle in the next *Chapter*, after he had spoken of the consecration of the Elements still calls them the *Bread and the Cup*, in three *verses* together, *As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup*, v. 26. *Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily*, v. 27. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*, v. 28. And our Saviour himself when he had said, *this is my blood of the new Testament*, immediately adds, * *but I say unto you, I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the Vine, until I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom*, that is, not till after his resurrection, which was the first step of his exaltation into the Kingdom given him by his Father, when the Scripture tells us he did eat and drink with his Disciples. But that which I observe from our Saviour's words is, that after the consecration of the *Cup*, and the delivering of it to his Disciples to drink of it, he tells them that he would thenceforth drink no more of that fruit of the Vine, which he had now drank with them, till after his Resurrection. From whence it is plain that it was the fruit of the Vine, real Wine, which our Saviour drank of, and communicated to his Disciples in the Sacrament.

* Matth. 26. 29.

Besides, if we consider that he celebrated this Sacrament before his Passion, it is impossible these words should be understood literally of the natural body and blood of Christ; because it was *his body broken* and *his blood shed* which he gave to his Disciples, which if we understand literally of his natural body broken

broken and his blood shed, then these words, *this is my body which is broken, and this is my blood which is shed,* could not be true, because his Body was then whole and unbroken, and his blood not then shed; nor could it be a *propitiatory Sacrifice* (as they affirm this Sacrament to be) unless they will say that propitiation was made before Christ suffer'd: And it is likewise impossible that the Disciples should understand these words literally, because they not only plainly saw that what he gave them was *Bread* and *Wine*, but they saw likewise as plainly that it was not his Body which was given, but his Body which gave that which was given; not his body *broken* and his blood *shed*, because they saw him alive at that very time and beheld his body whole and unpierc'd; and therefore they could not understand these words literally: If they did, can we imagine that the Disciples, who upon all other occasions were so full of questions and objections, should make no difficulty of this matter? nor so much as ask our Saviour, *how* can these things be? that they should not tell him, we see this to be Bread and that to be Wine, and we see thy Body to be distinct from both; we see thy Body not broken, and thy Blood not shed.

From all which it must needs be very evident, to any man that will impartially consider things, how little reason there is to understand those words of our Saviour, *this is my body*, and *this is my blood*, in the sense of *Transubstantiation*; nay, on the contrary, that there is very great reason and an evident necessity to understand them otherwise. I proceed to shew,

2*ly*. That this Doctrine is not grounded upon the *perpetual belief of the Christian Church*, which the Church of *Rome* vainly pretends as an evidence that the Church did always understand and interpret our Saviour's words in this sense.

To manifest the groundlessness of this pretence, I shall, 1. shew by plain testimony of the *Fathers* in several Ages, that this Doctrine was not the belief of the ancient Christian Church. 2. I shall shew the time and occasion of its coming in, and by what degrees it grew up and was establish'd in the *Roman* Church. 3. I shall answer their great pretended Demonstration that this always was and must have been the constant belief of the Christian Church.

1. I shall shew by plain Testimonies of the *Fathers* in several Ages, for above five hundred years after Christ, that this Doctrine was not the *belief of the ancient Christian Church*. I deny not but that the *Fathers* do, and that with great reason, very much magnifie the wonderful mystery and efficacy of this Sacrament, and frequently speak of a great Supernatural change made by the divine benediction; which we also readily acknowledge. They say indeed, that the Elements of Bread and Wine do by the divine blessings become to us the Body and Blood of Christ: But they likewise say that the names of the things signified are given to the Signs; that the Bread and Wine do still remain in their proper nature and substance, and that they are turn'd into the substance of our Bodies; that the Body of Christ in the Sacrament is not his natural Body, but the sign and figure of it; not that Body which was crucified, nor that Blood which was shed upon the Cross; and that it is impious to understand the *eating of the flesh of the Son of man* and *drinking his blood* literally; all which are directly opposite to the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* and utterly inconsistent with it. I will select but some few Testimonies of many things which I might bring to this purpose.

I begin with *Justin Martyr*, who says expresly, that * *our Blood* and *Flesh are nourished* by the conversion *of that food* which we receive in the *Eucharist*: But *that* cannot be the natural body and blood of Christ, for no man will say that *that* is converted into the nourishment of our bodies.

* Apol. 2 p. 98 Edit. Paris. 1636.

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† Lib. 4. c. 34. The *Second* is † *Irenæus*, who speaking of this Sacrament says, that the *bread which is from the earth receiving the divine invocation is now no longer common bread, but the Eucharist (*or Sacrament*) consisting of two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly.* He says it is no longer common bread, but after invocation or consecration it becomes the Sacrament, that is, bread sanctified, consisting of two things, an earthly and a heavenly; the earthly thing is bread, and the heavenly is the divine blessing which by the invocation or consecration is added to it. And * elsewhere he hath this passage, *when therefore the cup that is mix'd (*that is, of Wine and Water*) and the bread that is broken receives the word of God, it becomes the Eucharist of the blood and body of Christ, of which the substance of our flesh is increased and consists*; but if that which we receive in the Sacrament do nourish our bodies, it must be bread and wine, and not the natural body and blood of Christ. There is another remarkable Testimony of *Irenæus*, which though it be not now extant in those works of his which remain, yet hath been preserv'd by * *Oecumenius*, and it is this: when (says he) *the Greeks had taken some Servants, of the Christian Catechumeni* (that is, such as had not been admitted to the Sacrament) *and afterwards urged them by violence to tell them some of the secrets of the Christians, these Servants having nothing to say that might gratify those who offered violence to them, except only that they had heard from their Masters that the divine Communion was the blood and body of Christ, they thinking that it was really blood and flesh, declar'd as much to those that question'd them. The Greeks taking this as if it were really done by the Christians, discovered it to others of the Greeks; who hereupon put* Sanctus *and* Blandina *to the torture to make them confess it.* To whom *Blandina* boldly answered, *How could they endure to do this, who by way of exercise* (or abstinence) *do not eat that flesh which may lawfully be eaten?* By which it appears that this which they would have charg'd upon *Christians*, as if they had literally eaten the flesh and blood of Christ in the Sacrament, was a false accusation which these Martyrs denied, saying they were so far from that, that they for their part did not eat any flesh at all.

* Lib. 5.

* Commen. in 1 Pet. c. 3.

The next is *Tertullian*, who proves against *Marcion* the Heretick that the Body of our Saviour was not a meer phantasm and appearance, but a real Body, because the Sacrament is a figure and image of his Body; and if there be an image of his body he must have a real body, otherwise the Sacrament would be an image of an image. His words are these, * *The bread which our Saviour took and distributed to his Disciples he made his own body, saying this is my body, that is, the image or figure of my body. But it could not have been the figure of his body, if there had not been a true and real body.* And arguing against the *Scepticks* who denied the certainty of sense he useth this Argument: That if we question our senses we may doubt whether our Blessed Saviour were not deceived in what he heard, and saw, and touched. † *He might* (says he) *be deceived in the voice from heaven, in the smell of the ointment with which he was anointed against his burial, and in the taste of the wine which he consecrated in Remembrance of his blood.* So that it seems we are to trust our senses, even in the matter of the Sacrament: and if that be true, the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* is certainly false.

* Advers. Marchionem l. 4. p. 571. Edit. Rigal Paris. 1634.

† Lib. de Anima, p. 319.

* Edit. Huetii. *Origen* in his * Comment on *Matth.* 15. speaking of the Sacrament hath this Passage, *That food which is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught*, which none surely will say of the Body of Christ. And afterwards he adds by way of explication, *it is not the matter of the bread, but the words which are spoken over it, which profiteth him that worthily eateth the Lord: and this* (he says) *he had spoken concerning the Typical and Symbolical body.* So that the matter of bread

remaineth

remaineth in the Sacrament, and this *Origen* calls the *Typical* and *Symbolical* body of Christ; and it is not the natural body of Christ which is there eaten: for the food eaten in the Sacrament, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught. This Testimony is so very plain in the Cause that *Sextus Senensis* suspects this place of *Origen* was depraved by the Hereticks. *Cardinal Perron* is contented to allow it to be *Origen's*, but rejects his Testimony because he was accused of Heresie by some of the Fathers, and says he talks like a Heretick in this place. So that with much ado this Testimony is yielded to us. The same *Father* in his * *Homilies* upon *Leviticus* speaks thus, *There is also in the new Testament a letter which kills him who doth not Spiritually understand those things which are said; for if we take according to the Letter that which is said, EXCEPT YE EAT MY FLESH AND DRINK MY BLOOD, this Letter kills.* And this also is a killing Testimony, and not to be answered but in Cardinal *Perron's* way by saying *he talks like a Heretick.*

St. *Cyprian* hath a whole *Epistle* * to *Cecilius*, against those who gave the Communion in Water only without Wine mingled with it; and his main argument against them is this, that *the blood of Christ with which we are redeemed and quickned cannot seem to be in the Cup when there is no Wine in the Cup by which the blood of Christ is represented:* and afterwards he says, that *contrary to the Evangelical and Apostolical Doctrine, water was in some places offer'd* (or *given*) *in the Lord's Cup, which* (says he) *alone cannot express* (or represent) *the blood of Christ.* And lastly he tells us, that *by Water* the people is understood, *by Wine the blood of Christ is shewn* (or represented) *but when in the Cup water is mingled with Wine the people is united to Christ.* So that according to this argument *Wine* in the Sacramental *Cup* is no otherwise changed into the *blood of Christ than the Water* mixed with it is changed into the *People* which are said to be *united to Christ.*

I omit many others, and pass to St. *Austin* in the *fourth Age* after Christ. And I the rather insist upon his Testimony, because of his eminent esteem and authority in the *Latin* Church; and he also calls the *Elements* of the Sacrament the *figure and sign of Christ's body and blood.* In his Book against *Adamantus* the *Manichee* we have this expression. * *Our Lord did not doubt to say, this is my body when he gave the sign of his body.* And in his explication of the third *Psalm*, speaking of *Judas* whom our Lord admitted to *his* last Supper, *in which* (says he) † *he commended and delivered to his Disciples the figure of his body*; Language which would now be censured for Heresie in the Church of *Rome.* Indeed he was never *accus'd of Heresie*, as Cardinal *Perron* says *Origen* was, but *he talks as like* one as *Origen* himself. And in his *Comment* on the 98. *Psalm* speaking of the offence which the Disciples took at that saying of our Saviour, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, &c.* he brings in our Saviour speaking thus to them, † *Ye must understand spiritually, what I have said unto you; ye are not to eat this body which ye see, and to drink that blood which shall be shed by those that shall crucifie me. I have commended a certain Sacrament to you, which being spiritually understood will give you life.* What more opposite to the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, than that the Disciples were not to eat that Body of Christ which they saw, nor to drink that blood which was shed upon the Cross, but that all this was to be understood spiritually and according to the nature of a Sacrament? for *that body* he tells us is not here but in heaven, in his Comment upon these words, *Me ye have not always.* * *He speaks* (says he) *of the presence of his body: ye shall have me according to my providence according to Majesty and invisible grace: but according to the flesh which the*

* Hom. 7. in Levit.
* Ep. 63.
* Aug. cont. Adim. c. 12.
† Enar. in Psal. 3.
† Enar. in Psal. Tom. 8. p. 16.
† Id. Tom. 9. p.
* In Joan. Tract. 50.

the word assumed, according to that which was born of the Virgin Mary, *ye shall not have me: therefore because he conversed with his Disciples forty days, he is ascended up into heaven, and is not here.*

In his 23*d* Epistle; † *If the Sacrament* (says he) *had not some resemblance of those things whereof they are Sacraments, they would not be Sacraments at all: but from this resemblance they take for the most part the names of the things which they represent. Therefore as the Sacrament of the Body of Christ is in some manner or sense Christ's body, and the Sacrament of his blood is the blood of Christ; So the Sacrament of faith (*meaning *Baptism) is faith.* Upon which words of St. *Austin* there is this remarkable *Gloss* in their own *Canon Law*; * *The heavenly Sacrament which truly represents the flesh of Christ is called the body of Christ; but improperly: whence it is said, that after a manner, but not according to the truth of the thing but the Mystery of the thing signified; So that the meaning is, it is called the body of Christ, that is, it signifies the body of Christ:* And if this be St. *Austin*'s meaning, I am sure no *Protestant* can speak more plainly against *Transubstantiation*. And in the ancient *Canon* of the *Mass*, before it was chang'd in complyance with this new Doctrine, it is expresly call'd *a Sacrament, a Sign, an Image and a Figure of Christ's body.* To which I will add that remarkable passage of St. *Austin* cited by * *Gratian, That as we receive the similitude of his death in Baptism, so we may also receive the likeness of his flesh and blood, that so neither may truth be wanting in the Sacrament, nor Pagans have occasion to make us ridiculous for drinking the blood of one that was slain.*

† *Id Tom. 2. p. 93.*

* *De Consecrat. dist. 2. Hoc est.*

* *De Consecrat. dist. 2. Sect. Utrum.*

I will mention but one Testimony more of this *Father*, but so clear a one as it is impossible any man in his wits that had believed *Transubstantiation* could have utter'd. It is in his *Treatise* * *de doctrina Christiana*; where laying down several Rules for the right understanding of Scripture, he gives this for one. If (says he) *the speech be a precept forbidding some heinous wickedness or crime, or commanding us to do good, it is not figurative; but if it seem to command any heinous wickedness or crime, or to forbid that which is profitable and beneficial to others, it is figurative. For example, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you: This seems to command a heinous wickedness and crime, therefore it is a figure; commanding us to communicate of the passion of our Lord, and with delight and advantage to lay up in our memory that his flesh was crucified and wounded for us.* So that, according to St. *Austin*'s best skill in interpreting Scripture, the *literal eating* of the flesh of Christ and drinking his blood would have been a great impiety; and therefore the expression is to be understood *figuratively*; not as Cardinal *Perron* would have it, only in opposition to the eating of his flesh and blood in the gross appearance of flesh and blood, but to the real eating of his natural body and blood under any appearance whatsoever: For St. *Austin* doth not say, this is a Figurative speech wherein we are commanded really to feed upon the natural body and blood of Christ under the *species* of bread and wine, as the *Cardinal* would understand him; for then the speech would be literal and not figurative: But he says, this is a figurative speech wherein we are commanded spiritually to feed upon the remembrance of his Passion.

* *Lib. Tom. 3. p. 53.*

To these I will add but *three* or *four* Testimonies more in the *two* following Ages.

The first shall be of *Theodoret*, who speaking of that * Prophecy of *Jacob* concerning our Saviour, *he washed his garments in Wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes,* hath these words, † *as we call the mystical fruit of the Vine (*that is, the Wine in the Sacrament*) after consecration the blood of the Lord, so he (*viz. *Jacob) calls the blood of the true Vine (viz. of* Christ) *the blood*

*Gen. 49. 11.

† *Dialog.* 1

of

of the grape: but the blood of Christ is not literally and properly but only figuratively the blood of the grape, in the same sense as he is said to be the true Vine; and therefore the Wine in the Sacrament after consecration is in like manner not literally and properly but figuratively the blood of Christ. And he explains this afterwards, saying, that *our Saviour changed the names, and gave to his Body the name of the Symbol or Sign, and to the Symbol or Sign the name of his Body; thus when he had call'd himself the Vine, he call'd the Symbol or Sign his blood*; so that in the same sense that he call'd himself the Vine, he call'd the Wine, which is the Symbol of his blood, his blood: *For*, says he, *he would have those who partake of the divine mysteries not to attend to the nature of the things which are seen, but by the change of names to believe the change which is made by grace; for he who call'd that which by nature is a body wheat and bread, and again likewise call'd himself the Vine, he honour'd the Symbols with the name of his body and blood: not changing nature but adding grace to nature.* Where you see he says expresly, that when he call'd the *Symbols* or Elements of the Sacrament, *viz. Bread* and *Wine* his *Body* and *Blood*, he made no change in the nature of the things, only added grace to nature, that is, by the divine grace and blessing he raised them to a spiritual and supernatural virtue and efficacy.

The *Second* is of the same *Theodoret* in his second Dialogue between a *Catholique*, under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and an *Heretique* under the name of *Eranistes*; who maintaining that the Humanity of Christ was chang'd into the substance of the Divinity (which was the Heresie of *Eutyches*) he illustrates the matter by this Similitude. *As*, says he, *the Symbols of the Lord's body and blood are one thing before the invocation of the Priest, but after the invocation are changed and become another thing; So the body of our Lord after his ascension is changed into the divine substance.* But what says the Catholique *Orthodoxus* to this? why, he talks just like one of Cardinal *Perron*'s Heretiques: *Thou art*, says he, *caught in thy own net; because the mystical Symbols after consecration do not pass out of their own nature: for they remain in their former substance, figure and appearance, and may be seen and handled even as before.* He does not only deny the outward figure and appearance of the Symbols to be chang'd, but the nature and substance of them, even in the proper and strictest sense of the word substance; and it was necessary so to do, otherwise he had not given a pertinent answer to the similitude urg'd against him.

The next is one of their own Popes, *Gelasius*, who brings the same Instance against the *Eutychians*; * *Surely*, says he, *the Sacraments which we receive of the body and blood of our Lord are a divine thing, so that by them we are made partakers of a divine nature, and yet it ceaseth not to be the substance or nature of Bread and Wine; and certainly the image and resemblance of Christ's body and blood are celebrated in the action of the mysteries*, that is, in the Sacrament. To make this Instance of any force against the *Eutychians*, who held that the body of Christ upon his ascension ceas'd and was chang'd into the substance of his Divinity, it was necessary to deny that there was any substantial change in the Sacrament of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. So that here is an infallible authority, one of their own Popes expresly against *Transubstantiation*.

The last Testimony I shall produce is of *Facundus* an *African* Bishop, who lived in the 6th Century. Upon occasion of justifying an expression of one who had said that *Christ also received the adoption of Sons*, he reasons thus. * *Christ vouchsafed to receive the Sacrament of adoption both when he was circumcised and baptised: And the Sacrament of Adoption may be called Adoption, as the Sacra-*

* Facund. p. 144 edit. Paris.

Sacrament of his body and blood, which is in the consecrated bread and cup, is by us called his body and blood: not that the bread, says he, *is properly his body and the cup his blood, but because they contain in them the mysteries of his body and blood; hence our Lord himself called the blessed bread and cup which he gave to his Disciples his body and blood.* Can any Man after this, believe that it was then, and had ever been, the universal and received Doctrine of the Christian Church, that the bread and wine in the Sacrament are substantially changed into the proper and natural body and blood of Christ?

By these plain Testimonies which I have produced, and I might have brought a great many more to the same purpose, it is I think evident beyond all denial that *Transubstantiation* hath not been *the perpetual belief of the Christian Church.* And this likewise is acknowledg'd by many great and learned men of the *Roman Church.* (a) *Scotus* acknowledgeth that this Doctrine was not always thought necessary to be believed, but that the necessity of believing it was consequent to that Declaration of the Church made in the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the III. And (b) *Durandus* freely discovers his inclination *to have believed the contrary, if the Church had not by that determination obliged men to believe it.* (c) *Tonstall* Bishop of *Durham* also yields that *before the Lateran Council men were at liberty as to the manner of Christ's presence in the Sacrament.* And (d) *Erasmus*, who lived and died in the Communion of the *Roman* Church, and than whom no man was better read in the ancient *Fathers*, doth confess that it was *late before the Church defined Transubstantiation, unknown to the Ancients both name and thing.* And (e) *Alphonsus a Castro* says plainly, that *concerning the Transubstantiation of the bread into the body of Christ, there is seldom any mention in the ancient Writers.* And who can imagine that these learned men would have granted the ancient Church and Fathers to have been so much Strangers to this Doctrine, had they thought it to have been the perpetual belief of the Church? I shall now in the

(a) in Sent. l. 4. Dist. 11. Q 3.

(b) In Sent. l. 4 dist. 11. q. 1. n. 15.

(c) de Euchar. l. 1. p. 146.

(d) In 1. Epist. ad Corinth. c 7 citante etiam Salmerone, Tom. 9. Tract. 16. p. 108.

(e) De Hæres. l. 8.

Second place, give an account of the *particular time and occasion of the coming in of this Doctrine,* and by what steps and degrees it grew up and was advanced into an *Article* of Faith in the *Romish Church.* The Doctrine of the *corporeal presence of Christ* was first started upon occasion of the Dispute about the *Worship of Images,* in opposition whereto the *Synod* of *Constantinople* about the year DCCL did argue thus, That our Lord having left us no other image of himself but the Sacrament, in which the substance of bread is the image of his body, we ought to make no other image of our Lord. In answer to this Argument the second *Council of Nice,* in the year DCCLXXXVII did declare, that the Sacrament after Consecration *is not the image and antitype* of Christ's body and blood, but is *properly* his body and blood. So that the *corporeal presence of the body of Christ in the Sacrament* was first brought *in to support the stupid Worship of Images:* And indeed it could never have come in upon a more proper occasion, nor have been applied to a fitter purpose.

And here I cannot but take notice how well this agrees with * *Bellarmine's* Observation, that *none of the Ancients who wrote of Heresies, hath put this errour* (viz. of denying *Transubstantiation*) *in his Catalogue; nor did any of the Ancients dispute against this errour for the first 600 years.* Which is very true, because there could be no occasion then to dispute against those who denied *Transubstantiation,* since, as I have shewn, this Doctrine was not in being, unless among the *Eutychian* Heretiques, for the first 600 years and more. But † *Bellarmine* goes on and tells us, that the *first who call'd in question the truth of the body of the Lord in the Eucharist were the ICONOMACHI* (the opposers

* De Eucharist. l. 1. c. 1.

† Ibid.

posers of Images) *after the year* DCC *in the Council of* Constantinople; *for these said there was one Image of Christ instituted by Christ himself*, viz. *the bread and wine in the Eucharist, which represents the body and blood of Christ: Wherefore from that time the Greek Writers often admonish us that the Eucharist is not the figure or image of the body of the Lord, but his true body, as appears from the* VII. *Synod*; which agrees most exactly with the account which I have given of the first rise of this Doctrine, which began with the *corporeal presence of Christ* in the Sacrament, and afterwards proceeded to *Transubstantiation.*

And as this was the first occasion of introducing this *Doctrine* among the *Greeks*, so in the *Latin or Roman* Church *Paschasius Radbertus*, first a *Monk*, and afterwards *Abbot* of *Corbey*, was the first broacher of it in the year DCCCXVIII.

And for this, besides the Evidence of History, we have the acknowledgment of *two* very Eminent Persons in the Church of *Rome*, *Bellarmine* and *Sirmondus*, who do in effect confess that this *Paschasius* was the first who wrote to purpose upon this Argument. * *Bellarmine* in these words, *This Author was the first who hath seriously and copiously written concerning the truth of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist:* And † *Sirmondus* in these, *He so first explained the genuine sense of the Catholick Church, that he opened the way to the rest who afterwards in great numbers wrote upon the same Argument:* But though *Sirmondus* is pleased to say that he only first explained the sense of the Catholick Church in this Point, yet it is very plain from the Records of that Age which are left to us, that this was the first time that this Doctrine was broached in the *Latin* Church; and it met with great opposition in that Age, as I shall have occasion hereafter to shew. For *Rabanus Maurus*, Arch-bishop of *Mentz*, about the year DCCCXLVII. reciting the very words of *Paschasius* wherein he had delivered this Doctrine, hath this remarkable passage concerning the novelty of it; * *Some*, says he, *of late not having a right opinion concerning the Sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord, have said that this is the body and blood of our Lord, which was born of the Virgin* Mary, *and in which our Lord suffer'd upon the Cross and rose from the dead: which errour*, says he, *we have opposed with all our might.* From whence it is plain, by the Testimony of one of the greatest and most learned Bishops of that Age, and of eminent reputation for Piety, that what is now the very Doctrine of the Church of *Rome* concerning the Sacrament, was then esteemed an Error broach'd by some particular Persons, but was far from being the generally receiv'd Doctrine of that Age. Can any one think it possible that so Eminent a Person in the Church both for Piety and Learning, could have condemn'd this Doctrine as an Errour and a Novelty, had it been the general Doctrine of the Christian Church, not only in that but in all former Ages: and no censure pass'd upon him for that which is now *the great burning Article* in the Church of *Rome*, and esteemed by them one of the greatest and most pernicious Heresies?

Afterwards in the year MLIX, when *Berengarius* in *France* and *Germany* had rais'd a fresh opposition against this Doctrine, he was compell'd to recant it by Pope *Nicholas* and the *Council at Rome*, in these words, * *That the Bread and Wine which are set upon the Altar, after the Consecration are not only the Sacrament, but the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and are sensibly, not only in the Sacrament, but in Truth, handled and broken by the hands of the Priest, and ground or bruised by the Teeth of the faithful.* But it seems the *Pope* and his *Council* were not then skilful enough to express themselves rightly in this matter; for the *Gloss* upon the *Canon Law* says expressly, † *That unless we understand these words of* BERENGARIUS (that is in truth

* *De Script. Eccl.*
† *In vit.* Paschasii.
* *Epist. ad* Heribaldum, c. 33.
* Gratian. *de Consecrat. dist.* 2. Lanfranc. *de Corp. & San. Domini* c. 5. [illegible] 19.
† Gl. [illegible] D. [illegible] *ult.* 2. *in cap. Ego Berengarius.*

truth of the *Pope and his Council) in a sound sense we shall fall into a greater Heresie than that of BERENGARIUS: for we do not make parts of the Body of Christ.* The meaning of which *Gloss* I cannot imagine, unless it be this, That the *Body of Christ*, though it be in truth *broken*, yet it is not *broken into parts, (for we do not make parts of the body of Christ) but into wholes:* Now this new way of *breaking a Body*, not into *parts* but into *wholes*, (which in good earnest is the Doctrine of the Church of *Rome)* though to them that are able to believe *Transubstantiation* it may for any thing I know appear to be *sound sense*, yet to us that cannot believe so, it appears to be *solid nonsense*.

About XX years after, in the year MLXXIX Pope *Gregory* the VII*th* began to be sensible of this absurdity; and therefore in another *Council* at *Rome* made *Berengarius* to recant in another *Form*, viz. * *That the bread and wine which are placed upon the Altar, are substantially changed into the true and proper and quickning flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and after Consecration are the true Body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin, and which being offered for the Salvation of the World did hang upon the Cross, and sits at the right hand of the Father.*

* Waldens. Tom. 1. c. 13

So that from the first starting of this Doctrine in the *second Council of Nice* in the year DCCLXXXVII, till the *Council* under Pope *Gregory* the VII*th*. in the year MLXXIX. it was almost three hundred years that this Doctrine was contested, and before this misshapen *Monster of Transubstantiation could be lick'd* into that Form in which it is now setled and establish'd in the Church of *Rome*. Here then is a plain account of the first rise of this Doctrine, and of the several steps whereby it was advanced by the Church of *Rome* into an *Article of Faith*. I come now in the

Third place, to answer the great pretended *Demonstration* of the *impossibility that this Doctrine, if it had been new, should ever have come in, in any Age, and been received in the Church: and consequently it must of necessity have been the perpetual belief of the Church in all Ages:* For if it had not always been the Doctrine of the Church, whenever it had attempted first to come in there would have been a great stir and bustle about it, and the whole Christian World would have rose up in opposition to it. But *we* can shew no such time when it first came in, and when any such opposition was made to it, and therefore it was always the Doctrine of the Church. This *Demonstration* Monsieur *Arnauld*, a very learned man in *France*, pretends to be unanswerable: whether it be so or not, I shall briefly examine. And,

First, We do assign a punctual and very likely time of the first rise of this Doctrine, about the beginning of the *ninth* Age; though it did not take firm root, nor was fully setled and establish'd till towards the end of the *eleventh*. And this was the most likely time of all other, from the beginning of Christianity, for so gross an Error to appear; it being, by the confession and consent of their own *Historians*, the most dark and dismal time that ever happened to the Christian Church, both for *Ignorance*, and *Superstition* and *Vice*. It came in together with *Idolatry*, and was made use of to support it: A fit prop and companion for it. And indeed what *tares* might not the Enemy have sown in so dark and long a *Night*; when so considerable a part of the Christian World was lull'd asleep in profound Ignorance and Superstition? And this agrees very well with the account which our *Saviour* himself gives in the *Parable* of the *Tares*, of the springing up of Errors and Corruptions in the Field of the Church. * *While the men slept* the Enemy did his work in the Night, so that when they were awake they wondered how and whence the *tares* came; but being sure they

* Matth. 13. 24.

were

were there, and that they were not sown at first, they concluded *the Enemy had done it.*

Secondly, I have shewn likewise that there was *considerable opposition* made to this *Errour* at its first coming in. The general Ignorance and gross Superstition of that Age rendred the generality of people more quiet and secure, and disposed them to receive any thing that came under a pretence of mystery in Religion, and of greater reverence and devotion to the Sacrament, and that seemed any way to countenance the worship of *Images,* for which at that time they were zealously concern'd. But notwithstanding the security and passive temper of the People, the men most eminent for piety and learning in that Time made great resistance against it. I have already named *Rabanus* Arch-bishop of *Mentz,* who opposed it as an Errour lately sprung up, and which had then gain'd but upon some few Persons. To whom I may add *Heribaldus* Bishop of *Auxerres* in *France, Io. Scotus, Erigena,* and *Ratramus,* commonly known by the name of *Bertram,* who at the same time were employed by the Emperour *Charles* the *Bald* to oppose this growing Errour, and wrote learnedly against it. And these were the eminent men for learning in that time. And because Monsieur *Arnauld* will not be satisfied unless there were some stir and bustle about it, *Bertram* in his *Preface* to his Book tells us, that they *who according to their several opinions talked differently about the mystery of Christ's body and blood were divided by no small Schism.*

Thirdly, Though for a more clear and satisfactory answer to this pretended *Demonstration* I have been contented to unite this knot, yet I could without all these pains have cut it. For suppose this Doctrine had silently come in and without opposition, so that we could not assign the particular time and occasion of its first Rise; yet if it be evident from the Records of former Ages, for above D. years together, that this was not the ancient belief of the Church; and plain also, that this Doctrine was afterwards received in the *Roman Church,* though we could not tell how and when it came in, yet it would be the wildest and most extravagant thing in the world to set up a pretended Demonstration of Reason against plain Experience and matter of Fact. This is just *Zeno*'s Demonstration of the impossibility of motion against *Diogenes* walking before his Eyes. For this is to undertake to prove that impossible to have been, which most certainly was. Just thus the *Servants* in the *Parable* might have demonstrated that the *tares* were *wheat,* because they were sure none but good seed was sown at first, and no man could give any account of the punctual time when any *tares* were sown, or by whom: and if an enemy had come to do it, he must needs have met with great resistance and opposition; but no such resistance was made, and therefore there could be no *tares* in the *field,* but that which they call'd *tares* was certainly *good wheat.* At the same rate a man might demonstrate that *our King,* his *Majesty of Great Britain,* is not return'd into *England,* nor restor'd to his Crown; because there being so great and powerful an Army possess'd of his Lands, and therefore obliged by interest to keep him out, it was impossible he should ever come in without a great deal of fighting and blood shed: but there was no such thing, therefore he is not return'd and restor'd to his Crown. And by the like kind of Demonstration one might prove that the *Turk* did not invade *Christendom* last year, and besiege *Vienna*; because if it had the *Most Christian King,* who had the greatest Army in *Christendom* in a readiness, would certainly have employed it against him; but Monsieur *Arnauld* certainly knows no such thing was done: And therefore according to his way of Demonstration,

the matter of fact, so commonly reported and believed, concerning the *Turk's Invasion of Christendom* and *besieging Vienna* last year, was a perfect mistake. But a man may demonstrate till his head and heart ake, before he shall ever be able to prove that which certainly is, or was, never to have been. For of all sorts of impossibles nothing is more evidently so, than to make that which hath been not to have been. All the reason in the world is too weak to cope with so tough and obstinate a difficulty. And I have often wonder'd how a man of Monsieur *Arnauld*'s great wit and sharp Judgment cou'd prevail with himself to engage in so bad and baffled a Cause, or could think to defend it with so *wooden a Dagger* as his *Demonstration* of *Reason* against certain *Experience* and *matter of Fact*: A thing, if it be possible, of equal absurdity with what he pretends to demonstrate, *Transubstantiation* it self. I proceed to the

Third pretended Ground of this Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; and that is, *The Infallible Authority of the present Church to make and declare new Articles of faith*. And this in truth is the ground into which the most of the learned men of their Church did heretofore, and many do still resolve their belief of this Doctrine: And, as I have already shewn, do plainly say that they see no sufficient reason, either from *Scripture* or *Tradition*, for the belief of it: And that they should have believed the contrary had not the determination of the Church obliged them otherwise.

But if this Doctrine be obtruded upon the world meerly by virtue of the Authority of the *Roman* Church, and the Declaration of the *Council* under Pope *Gregory* the VII*th*. or of the *Lateran Council* under *Innocent* the III*d*. then it is a plain Innovation in the Christian Doctrine, and a new Article of Faith impos'd upon the Christian World. And if any Church hath this power, the Christian Faith may be enlarged and changed as often as men please; and that which is no part of our Saviour's Doctrine, nay, any thing, though never so absurd and unreasonable, may become an Article of Faith obliging all Christians to the belief of it, whenever the Church of *Rome* shall think fit to stamp her Authority upon it: which would make Christianity a most uncertain and endless thing.

The *Fourth* pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *the necessity of such a change as this in the Sacrament to the comfort and benefit of those who receive it*. But there is no colour for this, if the thing be rightly consider'd: Because the comfort and benefit of the Sacrament depends upon the blessing annexed to the Institution. And as *Water* in *Baptism*, without any substantial change made in that Element, may by the Divine blessing accompanying the Institution be effectual to the washing away of Sin, and Spiritual Regeneration; So there can no reason in the world be given why the Elements of *Bread* and *Wine* in the *Lord's Supper* may not, by the same Divine blessing accompanying this Institution, make the worthy receivers partakers of all the Spiritual comfort and benefit designed to us thereby without any substantial change made in those Elements, since our Lord hath told us, that *verily the flesh profiteth nothing*. So that if we could do so odd and strange a thing as to eat the very natural flesh and drink the blood of our Lord, I do not see of what greater advantage it would be to us than what we may have by partaking of the Symbols of his Body and blood as he hath appointed *in remembrance of him*. For the Spiritual efficacy of the Sacrament doth not depend upon the nature of the thing received, supposing we receive what our Lord appointed, and receive it with a right preparation and disposition of mind, but upon the supernatural blessing that goes along with it, and makes it effectual to those Spiritual ends for which it was appointed.

The

The *Fifth* and last pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *to magnifie the power of the Priest in being able to work so great a Miracle.* And this with great Pride and Pomp is often urg'd by them as a transcendent instance of the Divine Wisdom, to find out so admirable a way to raise the power and reverence of the Priest; that he should be able every day, and as often as he pleases, by repeating a few words to work so miraculous a change, and (as they love most absurdly and blasphemously to speak) *to make God himself.*

But this is to pretend to a power above that of God himself, for he did not, nor cannot make himself, nor do any thing that implies a contradiction, as *Transubstantiation* evidently does in their pretending *to make God.* For to make that which already is, and make that *now* which *always* was, is not only vain and trifling if it could be done, but impossible because it implies a contradiction.

And what if after all *Transubstantiation,* if it were possible and actually wrought by the Priest, would yet be no Miracle; For there are two things necessary to a Miracle, that there be a supernatural effect wrought, and that this effect be evident to sense. So that tho a supernatural effect be wrought, yet if it be not evident to sense, it is to all the ends and purposes of a Miracle as if it were not; and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because it self stands in need of another Miracle to give testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought. And neither in Scripture, nor in profane Authors, nor in common use of speech, is any thing call'd a Miracle but what falls under the notice of our senses: A *Miracle* being nothing else but *a supernatural effect evident to sense,* the great end and design whereof is to be a sensible proof and conviction to us of something that we do not see.

And for want of this Condition, *Transubstantiation,* if it were true, would be no Miracle. It would indeed be very *supernatural,* but for all that it would not be a *Sign* or *Miracle*: For a Sign or Miracle is always a thing sensible, otherwise it could be no Sign. Now that such a change as is pretended in *Transubstantiation,* should really be wrought, and yet there should be no sign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful, but not to sense; for our senses perceive no change, the Bread and Wine in the Sacrament to all our senses remaining just as they were before: And that a thing should remain, to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it; we wonder indeed when we see a strange thing done, but no man wonders when he sees nothing done. So that *Transubstantiation,* if they will needs have it a Miracle, is such a Miracle as any man may work that hath but the confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed: And though the Church of *Rome* may magnifie their Priests upon account of this Miracle which they say they can work every day and every hour, yet I cannot understand the reason of it; for when this great work (as they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done than if there were no Miracle: Now such a Miracle as to all appearance is no Miracle, I see no reason why a Protestant Minister, as well as a Popish Priest, may not work as often as he pleases; or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work it self. For surely nothing in the world is easier than to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few words over it to make it just what it was before. Every man, every day, may work ten thousand such Miracles.

And thus I have dispatch'd the first part of my Discourse, which was to consider the pretended Grounds and *Reasons* of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine, and to shew the weakness and insufficiency of them. I come in the

SECOND

II. SECOND place, to produce our *Objections* against it. Which will be of so much the greater force, because I have already shewn this Doctrine to be destitute of all Divine warrant and authority, and of any other sort of Ground sufficient in reason to justifie it. So that I do not now object against a Doctrine which hath a fair probability of Divine Revelation on its side, for that would weigh down all objections, which did not plainly overthrow the probability and credit of its Divine Revelation: But I object against a Doctrine by the meer Will and Tyranny of men impos'd upon the belief of Christians, without *any* evidence of *Scripture*, and against all the evidence of *Reason* and *Sense*.

The Objection I shall reduce to these *two* Heads. *First*, The infinite scandal of this Doctrine to the Christian Religion. And *Secondly*, The monstrous and insupportable absurdity of it.

First, *The infinite scandal of this Doctrine to the Christian Religion.* And that upon these *four* accounts. 1. Of the stupidity of this Doctrine. 2. The real barbarousness of this Sacrament and Rite of our Religion upon supposition of the truth of this Doctrine. 3. Of the cruel and bloody consequences of it. 4. Of the danger of Idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of, if this Doctrine be not true. 1. Upon account of *the stupidity of this Doctrine.* I remember that *Tully*, who was a man of very good sense, instanceth in the conceit of *eating God* as the extremity of madness, and so stupid an apprehension as he thought no man was ever guilty of. * *When we call*, says he, *the fruits of the earth Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we use but the common language; but do you think any man so mad as to believe that which he eats to be God?* It seems he could not believe that so extravagant a folly had ever entred into the mind of man. It is a very severe saying of *Averroes* the *Arabian* Philosopher (who lived after this Doctrine was entertained among *Christians*) and ought to make the Church of *Rome* blush, if she can; *I have travell'd*, says he *, *over the World, and have found divers* Sects; *but so sottish a* Sect *or Law I never found, as is the* Sect *of the* Christians; because *with their own teeth they devour their God whom they worship.* It was great stupidity in the People of *Israel* to say, *Come let us make us Gods*; but it was civilly said of them, *Let us make us Gods that may go before us*, in comparison of the Church of *Rome*, who say, *Let us make a God that we may eat him.* So that upon the whole matter I cannot but wonder that they should chuse thus to expose Faith to the contempt of all that are endued with Reason. And to speak the plain truth, the Christian Religion was never so horribly exposed to the scorn of Atheists and Infidels, as it hath been by this most absurd and senseless Doctrine. But thus it was foretold that † *the Man of Sin* should come *with Power and Signs and Lying Miracles, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*, with all the *Legerdemain* and *juggling* tricks of falshood and imposture; amongst which this of *Transubstantiation*, which they call a *Miracle*, and we a *Cheat*, is one of the chief: And in all probability those common *jugling* words of *hocus pocus*, are nothing else but a corruption of *hoc est corpus*, by way of ridiculous imitation of the Priests of the Church of *Rome* in their *trick* of *Transubstantiation.* Into such Contempt by this foolish Doctrine and pretended Miracle of theirs have they brought the most sacred and venerable Mystery of our Religion.

2. It is very scandalous likewise upon account of the real *barbarousness* of this Sacrament and Rite of our Religion, upon supposition of the truth of this Doctrine. Literally to *eat the flesh of the Son of man and to drink his blood*, St. *Austin*, as I have shewed before, declares to be a great *Impiety*. And the

* *De Nat. Deorum. l. 3.*

* Dionys. Carthus. *in 4. d. 51. 10 art. 1.*

† 2 *Thess.* 2. 10.

the impiety and barbarousness of the thing is not in truth extenuated, but only the appearance of it, by its being done under the *Species of Bread and Wine*: For the thing they acknowledge is really done, and they believe that they verily eat and drink the natural flesh and blood of Christ. And what can any man do more unworthily towards his Friend? How can he possibly use him more barbarously, than to feast upon his living flesh and blood? It is one of the greatest wonders in the world, that it should ever enter into the minds of men to put upon our Saviour's words, so easily capable of a more convenient sense, and so necessarily requiring it, a meaning so plainly contrary to Reason, and Sense, and even to Humanity it self. Had the ancient Christians owned any such Doctrine, we should have heard it from the Adversaries of our Religion in every page of their Writings; and they would have desired no greater advantage against the Christians than to have been able to hit them in the teeth with their feasting upon the natural flesh and blood of their Lord, and their God, and their best Friend. What endless triumphs would they have made upon this Subject? And with what confidence would they have set the cruelty used by Christians in their *Sacrament*, against their God *Saturn*'s eating his own Children, and all the cruel and bloody Rites of their Idolatry? But that no such thing was then objected by the *Heathens* to the *Christians*, is to a wise man instead of a thousand Demonstrations that no such Doctrine was then believed.

3. It is scandalous also upon account of the *cruel and bloody consequences* of this Doctrine; so contrary to the plain Laws of Christianity, and to one great end and design of this Sacrament, which is to unite Christians in the most perfect love and charity to one another: Whereas this Doctrine hath been the occasion of the most barbarous and bloody Tragedies that ever were acted in the World. For this hath been in the Church of *Rome* the great *burning Article*: and as absurd and unreasonable as it is, more Christians have been murthered for the denial of it than perhaps for all the other Articles of their Religion. And I think it may generally pass for a true observation, That all Sects are commonly most hot and furious for those things for which there is least reason; for what men want of Reason for their opinions, they usually supply and make up in Rage. And it was no more than needed to use this severity upon this occasion; for nothing but the cruel fear of death could in probability have driven so great a part of mankind into the acknowledgment of so unreasonable and senseless a Doctrine.

O Blessed Saviour! thou best Friend and greatest Lover of mankind, who can imagine thou didst ever intend that men should kill one another for not being able to believe contrary to their senses; for being unwilling to think, that thou shouldst make one of the most horrid and barbarous things that can be imagin'd a main Duty and principal Mystery of thy Religion; for not flattering the pride and presumption of the Priest who says he can make God, and for not complying with the folly and stupidity of the People who are made to believe that they can eat him?

4. Upon account of the danger of *Idolatry*; which they are certainly guilty of if this Doctrine be not true, and such a change as they pretend be not made in the Sacrament; for if it be not, then they worship a Creature instead of the Creator God blessed for ever. But such a change I have shewn to be impossible; or if it could be, yet they can never be certain that it is, and consequently are always in danger of Idolatry; and that they can never be certain that such a change is made, is evident; because according to the express determination of the Council of *Trent*, that de-

pends upon the mind and *intention of the Priest*, which cannot certainly be known but by Revelation, which is not pretended in this case. And if they be mistaken in this change, through the knavery or crossness of the Priest who will not *make God* but when he thinks fit, they must not think to excuse themselves from Idolatry because they intended to worship God and not a Creature; for so the *Persians* might be excus'd from Idolatry in worshipping the *Sun*, because they intend to worship God and not a Creature; and so indeed we may excuse all the Idolatry that ever was in the World, which is nothing else but a mistake of the Deity, and upon that mistake a worshipping of something as God which is not God.

II. Besides the infinite scandal of this Doctrine upon the accounts I have mentioned, *the monstrous absurdities* of it make it insupportable to any Religion. I am very well assur'd of the grounds of Religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular; and yet I cannot see that the foundations of any revealed Religion, are strong enough to bear the weight of so many and so great absurdities as this Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* would load it withal. And to make this evident, I shall not insist upon those gross contradictions, of the same Body being in so many several places at once; of our Saviour's giving away himself with his own hands to every one of his Disciples, and yet still keeping himself to himself; and a thousand more of the like nature: but to shew the absurdity of this Doctrine, I shall only ask these few Questions.

1. Whether any man have, or ever had greater evidence of the truth of any divine Revelation than every man hath of the falshood of *Transubstantiation?* Infidelity were hardly possible to men, if all men had the same evidence for the Christian Religion which they have against *Transubstantiation*, that is, the clear and irresistible evidence of sense. He that can once be brought to contradict or deny his senses, is at an end of certainty; for what can a man be certain of if he be not certain of what he sees? In some circumstances our senses may deceive us, but no Faculty deceives us so little and so seldom: And when our senses do deceive us, even that errour is not to be corrected without the help of our senses.

2. Supposing this Doctrine had been delivered in Scripture in the very same words that it is decreed in the Council of *Trent*, by what clearer evidence or stronger Argument could any man prove to me that such words were in the Bible, than I can prove to him that bread and wine after consecration are bread and wine still? He could but appeal to my eyes to prove such words to be in the Bible, and with the same reason and justice might I appeal to several of his senses to prove to him that the bread and wine after consecration are bread and wine still.

3. Whether it be reasonable to imagine that God should make that a part of the Christian Religion which shakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole? I mean the Miracles which were wrought by our Saviour and his Apostles, the assurance whereof did at first depend upon the certainty of sense. For if the senses of those who say they saw them were deceived, then there might be no Miracles wrought; and consequently it may justly be doubted whether that kind of confirmation which God hath given to the Christian Religion would be strong enough to prove it, supposing *Transubstantiation* to be a part of it: Because every man hath as great evidence that *Transubstantiation* is false, as he hath that the Christian Religion is true. Suppose then *Transubstantiation* to be part of the Christian Doctrine,

it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is Miracles: But of all Doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a Miracle. For if a Miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which any man hath of the truth of the Miracle he hath of the falshood of the Doctrine, that is, the clear evidence of his Senses. For that there is a Miracle wrought to prove *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not bread but the body of Christ*, there is only the evidence of sense; and there is the very same evidence to prove *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not the body of Christ but bread.* So that here would arise a new Controversie, whether a man should rather believe his Senses giving testimony against the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or bearing witness to a Miracle wrought to confirm that Doctrine; there being the very same evidence against the truth of the Doctrine, which there is for the truth of the Miracle: And then the Argument for *Transubstantiation* and the Objection against it would just ballance one another; and consequently *Transubstantiation* is not to be proved by a Miracle, because that would be, *to prove to a man by something that he sees, that he doth not see what he sees.* And if there were no other evidence that *Transubstantiation* is no part of the Christian Doctrine, this would be sufficient, that what proves the one, doth as much overthrow the other; and that Miracles which are certainly the best and highest external proof of Christianity are the worst proof in the world of *Transubstantiation*, unless a man can renounce his senses at the same time that he relies upon them. For a man cannot believe a Miracle without relying upon sense, nor *Transubstantiation* without renouncing it. So that never were any two things so ill coupled together as the Doctrine of Christianity and that of *Transubstantiation*, because they draw several ways, and are ready to strangle one another: For the main evidence of the Christian Doctrine, which is Miracles, is resolved into the certainty of sense, but this evidence is clear and point-black against *Transubstantiation.*

4. And *Lastly*, I would ask what we are to think of the Argument which our Saviour used to convince his Disciples after his Resurrection that his Body was really risen, and that they were not deluded by a Ghost or Apparition? Is it a necessary and conclusive Argument or not? † *And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I my self; for a Spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have.* But now if we suppose with the Church of *Rome* the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* to be true, and that he had instructed his Disciples in it just before his death, strange thoughts might justly have risen in their hearts, and they might have said to him; Lord, it is but a few days ago since thou didst teach us not to believe our senses, but directly contrary to what we saw, *viz.* that the bread which thou gavest us in the Sacrament, though we saw it and handled it and tasted it to be bread, yet was not bread, but thine own natural body; and now thou appealest to our senses to prove that this is thy body which we now see. If seeing and handling be an unquestionable evidence that things are what they appear to our senses, then we were deceived before in the Sacrament; and if they be not, then we are not sure now that this is thy body which we now see and handle, but it may be perhaps bread under the appearance of flesh and bones; just as in the Sacrament, that which we saw and handled and tasted to be bread was thy flesh and bones under the form and appearance of bread. Now upon this supposition it would have been a hard matter to have quieted the thoughts of his Disciples: For if the Argument which our Saviour used did certainly prove to them that what they saw and handled was his body,

† Luke 24. 38, 39.

his very natural flesh and bones, because they saw and handled them, (which it were impious to deny) it would as strongly prove that what they saw and received before in the Sacrament was not the natural body and blood of *Christ*, but real bread and wine: And consequently, that according to our Saviour's arguing after his Resurrection they had no reason to believe *Transubstantiation* before. For that very Argument by which our Saviour proves the reality of his body after his Resurrection doth as strongly prove the reality of bread and wine after Consecration. But our Saviour's Argument was most infallibly good and true, and therefore the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* is undoubtedly false.

Upon the whole matter I shall only say this, that some other Points between us and the Church of *Rome* are managed with some kind of wit and subtilty, but this of *Transubstantiation* is carried out by meer dint of impudence and facing down of Mankind.

And of this the more discerning persons of that Church are of late grown so sensible that they would now be glad to be rid of this odious and ridiculous Doctrine. But the Council of *Trent* hath rivetted it so fast into their Religion, and made it so necessary and essential a Point of their belief, that they cannot now part with it if they would; it is like a Mill-stone hung about the neck of Popery, which will sink it at the last.

And though some of their greatest Wits, as Cardinal *Perron*, and of late Monsieur *Arnauld*, have undertaken the defence of it in great Volumes; yet it is an absurdity of that monstrous and massy weight, that no humane authority or wit are able to support it: It will make the very Pillars of St. *Peter's* crack, and requires more Volumes to make it good than would fill the *Vatican*.

And now I would apply my self to the poor deluded People of that Church, if they were either permitted by their Priests, or durst venture without their leave, to look into their Religion and to examine the Doctrines of it. *Consider, and shew your selves men.* Do not suffer your selves any longer to be led blindfold, and by an implicit Faith in your Priests, into the belief of nonsense and contradiction. Think it enough and too much to let them rook you out of your money for pretended Pardons and counterfeit Reliques, but let not the Authority of any Priest or Church persuade you out of your Senses. Credulity is certainly a fault as well as Infidelity: and he who said, *Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed*; hath no where said, *Blessed are they that have seen and yet have not believed*; much less, *Blessed are they that believe directly contrary to what they see.*

To conclude this Discourse. By what hath been said upon this Argument it will appear, with how little truth, and reason, and regard to the interest of our common Christianity, it is so often said by our Adversaries, that there are as good Arguments for the belief of *Transubstantiation* as of the Doctrine of the *Trinity*: When they themselves do acknowledge with us that the Doctrine of the *Trinity* is grounded upon the Scriptures, and that according to the interpretation of them by the consent of the ancient Fathers: But their Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* I have plainly shewn to have no such Ground, and that this is acknowledged by very many learned men of their own Church. And this Doctrine of theirs being first plainly proved by us to be destitute of all Divine Warrant and Authority, our Objections against it from the manifold contradictions of it to Reason and Sense are so many Demonstrations of the falshood of it. Against all which they have nothing to put in the opposite Scale but the Infallibility of their Church,

for

for which there is even less colour of proof from Scripture than for *Transubstantiation* it self. But so fond are they of their own Innovations and Errours, that rather than the Dictates of their Church, how groundless and absurd soever, should be call'd in question; rather than not have their will of us in imposing upon us what they please, they will overthrow any Article of the Christian Faith, and shake the very foundations of our common Religion: A clear evidence that the Church of *Rome* is not the true Mother, since she can be so well contented that Christianity should be destroyed rather than the Point in question should be decided against her.

SERMON

SERMON XXVII.

The Proteſtant Religion Vindicated, from the Charge of Singularity and Novelty.

Preached before the King at *Whitehall*, *April* 2. 1680.

Joſhua xxiv. 15.

If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.



THeſe are the words of *Joſhua*; who after he had brought the People of *Iſrael* through many difficulties and hazards into the quiet poſſeſſion of the promiſed land, like a good Prince and Father of his Counrry was very ſolicitous, before his death, to lay the firmeſt foundation he could deviſe of the future happineſs and proſperity of that People in whoſe preſent ſettlement he had, by the bleſſing of God, been ſo ſucceſsful an inſtrument.

And becauſe he knew no means ſo effectual to this end, as to confirm them in the Religion and Worſhip of the true God, who had by ſo remarkable and miraculous a Providence planted them in that good Land; he ſummons the people together, and repreſents to them all thoſe conſiderations that might engage them and their poſterity for ever, to continue in the true Religion. He tells them what God had already done for them, and what he had promiſed to do more, if they would be faithful to him: And on the other hand, what fearful Calamities he had threatned, and would certainly bring upon them, in caſe they ſhould tranſgreſs his Covenant, and go and ſerve other Gods. And after many Arguments to this purpoſe, he concludes with this earneſt Exhortation at the 14*th.* *verſe*, *Now therefore fear the Lord, and ſerve him in ſincerity and in truth, and put away the Gods which your Fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt; and ſerve ye the Lord.*

And to give the greater weight and force to this Exhortation, he does by a very eloquent kind of inſinuation as it were once more ſet them at liberty, and leave them to their own election: It being the nature of man to ſtick more ſtedfaſtly to that which is not violently impoſed, but is our own free and deliberate choice: *And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord; chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.*

Which words offer to our conſideration theſe following obſervations.

1. *It is here ſuppoſed that a Nation muſt be of ſome Religion or other.* *Joſhua* does not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted.

2. *That though Religion be a matter of choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it ſelf nor to a good Governour, what Religion his people are of.* *Joſhua* does not put it to them as if it were an indifferent matter whether they ſerved

God

God or Idols; he had sufficiently declared before which of these was to be preferred.

3. *The true Religion may have several prejudices and objections against it: If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*, intimating that upon some accounts, and to some persons it may appear so.

4. *That the true Religion hath those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referr'd to any considerate man's choice.* And this seems to be the true Reason why *Joshua* refers it to them: Not that he thought the thing indifferent, but because he was fully satisfied that the truth and goodness of the one above the other was so evident, that there was no danger that any prudent man should make a wrong choice, *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve*; intimating that the plain difference of the things in competition would direct them what to chuse.

5. *The Example of Princes and Governours hath a very great influence upon the people in matters of Religion.* This I collect from the Context: And *Joshua* was sensible of it; and therefore though he firmly believed the true Religion to have those advantages that would certainly recommend it to every impartial man's judgment, yet knowing that the multitude are easily impos'd upon and led into errour, he thought fit to encline and determine them by his own example, and by declaring his own peremptory resolution in the case, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve; as for me, I and my house will serve the Lord.* Laws are a good security to Religion; but the Example of Governours is a living Law, which secretly over-rules the minds of men, and bends them to a compliance with it.

--------Non sic inflectere sensus
Humanos edicta valent, ut vita Regentis.

The Lives and Actions of Princes have usually a greater sway upon the minds of the People than their Laws.

All these Observations are I think very natural, and very considerable. I shall not be able to speak to them all; but shall proceed so far as the time and your patience will give me leave.

First, *It is here supposed that a Nation must be of some Religion or other. Joshua* does not put it to their choice whether they would worship any Deity at all. That had been too wild and extravagant a supposition, and which it is likely in those days had never entred into any man's mind. But he takes it for granted that all people will be of some Religion; and then offers it to their consideration which they would pitch upon, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your fathers served*, &c.

Religion is a thing to which men are not only formed by education and custom, but, as *Tully* says, *Quo omnes duce natura vehimur*, It is that to which we are all carried by a natural inclination; which is the true Reason why some Religion or other hath so universally prevaileed in all Ages and places of the world.

The temporal felicity of men, and the ends of Government can very hardly, if at all, be attained without Religion. Take away this, and all Obligations of Conscience cease: and where there is no obligation of Conscience, all security of Truth and Justice and mutual confidence among men is at an end. For why should I repose confidence in that man, why should I take his word, or believe his promise, or put any of my Interests and Concernments into his power, who hath no other restraint upon him but that of humane Laws, and is at Liberty in his own mind and principles to do whatever he

judgeth to be expedient for his Intereſt, provided he can but do it without danger to himſelf? So that declared Atheiſm and Infidelity doth juſtly bring men under a jealouſie and ſuſpicion with all mankind; and every wiſe man hath reaſon to be upon his guard againſt thoſe, from whom he hath no cauſe to expect more juſtice and truth and equity in their dealings than he can compell them to by the meer dint and force of Laws. For by declaring themſelves free from all other obligations they give us fair warning what we are to expect at their hands, and how far we may truſt them. Religion is the ſtrongeſt band of humane Society; and God ſo neceſſary to the welfare and happineſs of mankind, as it could not have been more, if we could ſuppoſe the Being of God himſelf to have been purpoſely deſigned and contrived for the benefit and advantage of men: So that very well may it be taken for granted, that a Nation muſt be of ſome Religion or other.

Secondly, *Though Religion be a matter of our choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it ſelf, nor to a good Governour, what Religion his people are of.* Notwithſtanding the ſuppoſition of the Text, *Joſhua* doth not leave them at liberty whether they will ſerve God or Idols: But by a very Rhetorical Scheme of Speech endeavours to engage them more firmly to the worſhip of the true God.

To countenance and ſupport the true Religion, and to take care that the people be inſtructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and ſeduce men from it, properly belongs to the Civil Magiſtrate. This power the Kings of *Iſrael* always exerciſed, not only with allowance, but with great approbation and commendation from God himſelf. And the caſe is not altered ſince Chriſtianity: The better the Religion is, the better it deſerves the countenance and ſupport of the Civil Authority. And this Power of the Civil Magiſtrate in matters of Religion was never called in queſtion, but by the *Enthuſiaſts* of theſe latter times: And yet among theſe, every Father and Maſter of a Family claims this Power over his Children and ſervants, at the ſame time that they deny it to the Magiſtrate over his Subjects. But I would fain know where the difference lyes. Hath a Maſter of a Family more power over thoſe under his Government than the Magiſtrate hath? No man ever pretended it: Nay, ſo far is it from that, that the natural Authority of a Father may be, and often is, limited and reſtrained by the Laws of the Civil Magiſtrate. And why then may not a Magiſtrate exerciſe the ſame power over his Subjects in matters of Religion, which every Maſter challengeth to himſelf in his own Family, that is, to eſtabliſh the true worſhip of God in ſuch manner and with ſuch circumſtances as he thinks beſt, and to permit none to affront it, or to ſeduce from it thoſe that are under his care? And to prevent all miſunderſtandings in this matter, I do not hereby aſcribe any thing to the Magiſtrate that can poſſibly give him any pretence of right to reject God's true Religion, or to declare what he pleaſes to be ſo, and what Books he pleaſes to be *Canonical* and *the Word of God*; and conſequently to make a falſe Religion ſo currant by the ſtamp of his Authority, as to oblige his Subjects to the profeſſion of it: Becauſe he who acknowledgeth himſelf to derive all his Authority from God, can pretend to none againſt Him. But if a falſe Religion be eſtabliſhed by Law, the caſe here is the ſame as in all other Laws that are ſinful in the matter of them, but yet made by a lawful Authority; in this caſe the Subject is not bound to profeſs a falſe Religion, but patiently to ſuffer for the conſtant profeſſion of the true.

And to ſpeak freely in this matter, I cannot think (till I be better inform'd, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of Conſcience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commiſſion'd, as the Apoſtles and firſt Publiſhers of the Goſpel were, and cannot juſtifie that Commiſſion by Miracles as they did, to affront the eſtabliſh'd Religion of a Nation (though it be falſe) and openly to draw men off from the profeſſion of it in contempt of the Magiſtrate and the Law: All that perſons of a different Religion can in ſuch a caſe reaſonably pretend to, is to enjoy the private liberty and exerciſe of their own Conſcience and Religion; For which they ought to be very thankful, and to forbear the open making of Proſelytes to their own Religion, (though they be never ſo ſure that they are in the right) till they have either an extraordinary Commiſſion from God to that purpoſe, or the Providence of God make way for it by the permiſſion or connivance of the Magiſtrate. Not but that every man hath a *Right* to publiſh and propagate the true Religion, and to declare it againſt a falſe one; but there is no *Obligation* upon any man to attempt this to no purpoſe, and when without a miracle it can have no other effect but the loſs of his own life: unleſs he have an immediate Command and Commiſſion from God to this purpoſe, and be endued with a power of Miracles, as a publick Seal and Teſtimony of that Commiſſion, which was the caſe of the *Apoſtles*, who after they had received an immediate Commiſſion were not to enter upon the execution of it, but to *ſtay at* Jeruſalem, *till they were endued with power from on high.* In this caſe a man is to abide all hazards, and may reaſonably expect both extraordinary aſſiſtance and ſucceſs, as the Apoſtles had; and even a miraculous protection till his work be done; and after that, if he be call'd to ſuffer Martyrdom, a ſupernatural ſupport under thoſe ſufferings.

And that they are guilty however of groſs Hypocriſie who pretend a further obligation of Conſcience in this matter, I ſhall give this plain Demonſtration, which relies upon Conceſſions generally made on all hands, and by all Parties. No Proteſtant (that I know of) holds himſelf obliged to go and Preach up his Religion and make Converts in *Spain* or *Italy:* Nor do either the *Proteſtant* Miniſters or *Popiſh* Prieſts think themſelves bound in Conſcience to preach the Goſpel in *Turky*, and to confute the *Alchoran*, to convert the *Mahometans*. And what is the Reaſon? becauſe of the ſeverity of the Inquiſition in *Popiſh* Countrys, and of the Laws in *Turky*. But doth the danger then alter the obligation of Conſcience? No certainly; but it makes men throw off the falſe pretence and diſguiſe of it: But where there is a real obligation of Conſcience, danger ſhould not deter men from their Duty, as it did not the Apoſtles: which ſhews their caſe to be different from ours, and that probably this matter was ſtated right at firſt. So that whatever is pretended this is certain, that the *Prieſts* and *Jeſuites* of the Church of *Rome* have in truth no more obligation of Conſcience to make Converts here in *England* than in *Sueden* or *Turky*; where it ſeems the evident danger of the attempt hath for theſe many years given them a perfect diſcharge from their duty in this particular. I ſhall join the

Third and *Fourth* Obſervations together. That *though the true Religion may have ſeveral prejudices and objections againſt it, yet upon examination there will be found thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may ſafely be referred to any conſiderate man's choice*: *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve. If it ſeem evil unto you*; Intimating, that to ſome perſons and upon ſome accounts it may appear ſo. But when the matter is truly repreſented, the choice is not difficult, nor requires any long deliberation, *Chuſe you* this day *whom you will ſerve.* Let but the Cauſe be fully

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and impartially heard, and a wise man may determine himself upon the spot, and give his Verdict without ever going from the Bar.

The true Religion hath always lain under some prejudices with partial and inconsiderate men; which commonly spring from one of these *two* Causes, either the *Prepossessions of a contrary Religion*, or the *contrariety of the true Religion to the vicious inclinations and practices of men*, which usually lies at the bottom of all prejudice against Religion. Religion is an enemy to mens beloved lusts, and therefore they are enemies to Religion. I begin with the *first*, which is as much as I shall be able to compass at this time.

I. *The Prepossessions of a false Religion*; which commonly pretends *two* advantages on its side, *Antiquity* and *Universality*; and is wont to object to the true Religion *Novelty* and *Singularity*. And *both* these are intimated both before and after the Text: *Put away the gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt: And chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose Land ye dwell.* Idolatry was the Religion of their Fathers, and had spread it self over the greatest and most ancient Nations of the World and the most famous for Learning and Arts, the *Chaldeans* and *Egyptians*; and was the Religion of the *Amorites* and the Nations round about them. So that *Joshua* represents the *Heathen Religion* with all its strength and advantage, and does not dissemble its confident pretence to *Antiquity* and *Universality*, whereby they would also insinuate the *Novelty* and *Singularity* of the worship of the God of *Israel*. And it is very well worthy our observation, that one or both of these have always been the Exceptions of false Religions (especially of *Idolatry* and *Superstition*) against the true Religion. The ancient Idolaters of the world pretended their Religion to be *ancient* and *universal*, that their Fathers served these Gods, and that the worship of the God of *Israel* was a plain Innovation upon the *Ancient* and *Catholick Religion* of the World, and that the very first rise and original of it was within the memory of their Fathers; and no doubt they were almost perpetually upon the *Jews* with that pert question, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* and telling them, that it was the Religion of a very small part and corner of the World, confined within a little Territory: But the great Nations of the world, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, famous for all kind of knowledge and wisdom, and indeed all the Nations round about them, worshipped other Gods: And therefore it was an intolerable arrogance and singularity in them, to condemn their Fathers and all the world, to be of a Religion different from all other Nations, and hereby to separate themselves and make a *Schism* from the rest of mankind.

And when the Gospel appeared in the world, which the Apostle to the *Hebrews* (to prevent the scandal of that word) calls *the time of Reformation*, the *Jews* and *Heathen* still renewed the same Objections against Christianity. The *Jews* urged against it, not the ancient *Scriptures* and the true word of God, but that which they pretended to be of much greater Authority, the *unwritten* Word, the ancient and constant *Traditions* of their Church; and branded this new Religion with the name of Heresie, *After the way*, (saith St. *Paul*) *that you call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all things that are written in the Law, and in the Prophets*: By which we see, that they of the Church of *Rome* were not the first who called it *Heresie* to reject humane Traditions, and to make the Scriptures the Rule of Faith: This was done long before by their Reverend Predecessors, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*.

And the *Gentiles*, they pretended against it both *Antiquity* and *Universality*, the constant belief and practice of all Ages, and almost all Places of the World; *Sequimur majores nostros qui feliciter secuti sunt suos*, says *Symmachus*, *We follow our Forefathers, who happily followed theirs*; But you bring in a new Religion, never known nor heard of in the World before.

And when the Christian Religion was most miserably depraved and corrupted, in that dismal night of Ignorance which over-spread these *Western* Parts of the World about the *Ninth* and *Tenth Centuries*; and many pernicious Doctrines and Superstitious Practices were introduced, to the woful defacing of the Christian Religion, and making it quite another thing from what our Saviour had left it; and these Corruptions and Abuses had continued for several Ages: No sooner was a *Reformation* attempted but the Church of *Rome* make the same out-cry of *Novelty* and *Singularity*: And though we have substantially answered it a thousand times, yet we cannot obtain of them to forbear that thread-bare Question, *Where was your Religion before Luther?*

I shall therefore apply my self to answer these *two* Exceptions with all the brevity and clearness I can: And I doubt not to make it appear, that as to the point of *Universality* (though that be no-wise necessary to justifie the truth of any Religion) ours is not inferiour to theirs; if we take in the Christians of all Ages, and of all parts of the World: And as to the point of *Antiquity*, that our Faith and the Doctrines of our Religion have clearly the advantage of theirs; all *our* Faith being unquestionably ancient, *theirs* not so.

1. As to the Point of *Universality*. Which they of the Church of *Rome*, I know not for what reason, will needs make an inseparable property and mark of the true Church. And they never flout at the Protestant Religion with so good a grace among the ignorant People, as when they are bragging of their Numbers, and despising poor Protestancy because embraced by so few. This *pestilent Northern Heresie* (as of late they scornfully call it) entertained it seems only in this cold and cloudy Corner of the World, by a company of dull stupid People, that can neither penetrate into the proofs nor the Possibility of *Transubstantiation*; whereas to the more refined *Southern* Wits all these difficult and obscure Points are as clear as their Sun at Noon day.

But to speak to the thing it self. If Number be necessary to prove the truth and goodness of any Religion, *ours* upon enquiry will be found not so inconsiderable as our Adversaries would make it. Those of the *Reformed* Religion, according to the most exact calculations that have been made by learned men, being esteemed not much unequal in number to those of the *Romish* persuasion. But then if we take in the ancient Christian Church, whose Faith was the same with ours; and other Christian Churches at this day, which altogether are vastly greater and more numerous than the *Roman* Church, and which agree with us, several of them in very considerable Doctrines and Practices in dispute between us and the Church of *Rome*, and all of them in disclaiming that fundamental point of the *Roman* Religion, and *Summ of Christianity* (as *Bellarmine* calls it) I mean the *Supremacy of the Bishop of* Rome *over all Christians and Churches in the World*, then the Number on our side will be much greater than on theirs.

But we will not stand upon this advantage with them. Suppose we were by much the fewer. So hath the true Church of God often been, without any the least prejudice to the truth of their Religion. What think we of the Church in *Abraham*'s time, which for ought we know was confined

fined to one Family; and one small Kingdom, that of *Melchisedec* King of *Salem*? What think we of it in *Moses* his time, when it was confined to one People wandring in a Wilderness? What of it in *Elijah*'s time, when besides the two Tribes that worshipped at *Jerusalem*, there were in the other *ten* but *seven thousand that had not bowed their knee to Baal*? What in our Saviour's time, when the whole Christian Church consisted of twelve Apostles, and seventy Disciples, and some few Followers beside? How would *Bellarmine* have despised this little Flock, because it wanted one or two of his goodliest marks of the true Church, *Universality* and *Splendor*? And what think we of the Christian Church in the height of *Arianism* and *Pelagianism*, when a great part of *Christendom* was over-run with these Errors, and the number of the *Orthodox* was inconsiderable in comparison of the *Hereticks*.

But what need I to urge these Instances? As if the Truth of a Religion were to be estimated and carried by the *major Vote*; which as it can be an Argument to none but Fools, so I dare say no honest and wise man ever made use of it for a solid proof of the truth and goodness of any Church or Religion. If multitude be an Argument that men are in the right, in vain then hath the *Scripture* said, *thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil:* For if this Argument be of any force, the greater Number never go wrong.

2. As to the Point of *Antiquity*. This is not always a certain Mark of the true Religion. For surely there was a time when Christianity began and was a new Profession, and then both *Judaism* and *Paganism* had certainly the advantage of it in Point of Antiquity. But the proper Question in this Case is, *Which is the true Ancient Christian Faith, that of the Church of* Rome *or Ours*? And to make this matter plain, it is to be considered, that a great part of the *Roman* Faith is the same with *Ours*; as, namely, the Articles of the Apostles *Creed*, as explained by the first four General Councils. And these make up our whole Faith, so far as concerns matters of meer and simple Belief, that are of absolute necessity to Salvation. And in this Faith of Ours, there is nothing wanting that can be shewn in any ancient *Creed* of the Christian Church. And thus far *Our* Faith, and *theirs* of the *Roman* Church, are undoubtedly of equal Antiquity, that is, as ancient as Christianity it self.

All the Question is, as to the matters in difference between us. The principal whereof are the twelve new Articles of the Creed of Pope *Pius* the IV, concerning the *Sacrifice of the Mass, Transubstantiation*, the *Communion in one kind only, Purgatory, &c.* not one of which is to be found in any ancient *Creed* or Confession of Faith generally allowed in the Christian Church. The Antiquity of these we deny, and affirm them to be Innovations: and have particularly proved them to be so, not only to the answering, but almost to the silencing of our Adversaries.

And as for the *negative* Articles of the *Protestant* Religion, in opposition to the Errors and Corruptions of the *Romish* Faith, these are by accident become a part of our Faith and Religion, occasioned by their Errors; as the renouncing of the Doctrines of *Arianism* became part of the *Catholick* Religion, after the rise of that Heresie.

So that the Case is plainly this; We believe and teach all that is contained in the *Creeds* of the ancient Christian Church, and was by them esteemed necessary to Salvation: and this is *Our* Religion. But now the Church of *Rome* hath innovated in the Christian Religion, and made several Additions to it; and greatly corrupted it both in the Doctrines and Practices of it: And these *Additions* and *Corruptions* are their Religion,

as

as it is distinct from ours; and both because they are *Corruptions* and *Novelties* we have rejected them: And our rejection of these is our Reformation: And our Reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be so ancient as their Corruptions: All Reformation necessarily supposing Corruptions and Errors to have been before it.

And now we are at a little better leisure to answer that captious Question of theirs, *Where was your Religion before Luther?* Where-ever Christianity was; in some places more pure, in others more corrupted: but especially in these *Western* parts of Christendom over-grown for several Ages with manifold Errors and Corruptions, which the Reformation hath happily cut off, and cast away. So that though our *Reformation* was as late as *Luther*, our *Religion* is as ancient as Christianity it self. For when the *Additions* which the Church of *Rome* hath made to the *ancient* Christian Faith, and their Innovations in Practice are pared off, that which remains of *their* Religion is *ours*; and *this* they cannot deny to be every tittle of it the ancient Christianity.

And what other Answer than this could the *Jews* have given to the like Question, if it had been put to them by the *ancient Idolaters* of the World, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* but the very same in substance which we now give to the Church of *Rome*? That for many Ages the Worship of the one true God had been corrupted, and the Worship of Idols had prevailed in a great part of the World: that *Abraham* was raised up by God to reform Religion, and to reduce the Worship of God to its first Institution; in the doing whereof he necessarily separated Himself and his Family from the Communion of those Idolaters. So that though the *Reformation* which *Abraham* began was new, yet his *Religion* was truly ancient; as old as that of *Noah*, and *Enoch*, and *Adam*. Which is the same in substance that we say, and with the same and equal reason.

And if they will still complain of the *Newness* of our *Reformation*, so do we too, and are heartily sorry it began no sooner; but however better late than never. Besides, it ought to be considered, that this Objection of *Novelty* lies against all Reformation whatsoever, though never so necessary, and though things be never so much amiss: And it is in effect to say, that if things be once bad, they must never be better, but must always remain as they are; for they cannot be better, without being reformed, and a Reformation must begin some time, and whenever it begins it is certainly new. So that if a real Reformation be made, the thing justifies it self; and no Objection of *Novelty* ought to take place against that which upon all accounts was so fit and necessary to be done. And if they of the Church of *Rome* would but speak their mind out in this matter, they are not so much displeased at the Reformation which we have made because it is *new*, as because it is a *Reformation*. It was the humour of *Babylon* of old (as the *Prophet* tells us) that she *would not be healed*; and this is still the temper of the Church of *Rome*, they *hate to be reformed*; and rather than acknowledge themselves to have been once in an Error, they will continue in it for ever. And this is that which at first made, and still continues the breach and *Separation* between us; of which we are no-wise guilty who have only reformed what was amiss, but they who obstinately persist in their Errors; and will needs impose them upon us and will not let us be of their Communion unless we will say they are no Errors.

II. The other *Prejudice* against the true Religion is, *the contrariety of it to the vicious inclinations and practices of Men.* II.

It is too heavy a yoke, and lays too great a restraint upon humane Nature. And this is that which in truth lies at the bottom of all Objections against Religion, *Men love darkness rather than light, because their Deeds are evil.*

But this Argument will require a Discourse by it self, and therefore I shall not now enter upon it; only crave your patience a little longer, whilst I make some Reflections upon what hath been already delivered.

You see what are the *Exceptions* which Idolatry and Superstition have always made, and do at this day still make, against the true Religion; and how slight and insignificant they are.

But do we then charge the Church of *Rome* with Idolatry? Our Church most certainly does so, and hath always done it from the beginning of the Reformation; in her *Homilies*, and *Liturgy*, and *Canons*, and in the *Writings* of her best and ablest *Champions*. And though I have, as impartially as I could, considered what hath been said on both sides in this Controversie; yet I must confess I could never yet see any tolerable defence made by them against this heavy charge. And they themselves acknowledge themselves to be greatly under the suspicion of it, by saying (as Cardinal *Perron* and others do) that the Primitive Christians for some Ages did neither worship Images, nor pray to Saints, for fear of being thought to approach too near the Heathen Idolatry: And which is yet more; divers of their most learned men do confess, that if *Transubstantiation* be not true, they are gross Idolaters as any in the World. And I hope they do not expect it it from us, that in complement to them, and to acquit them from the charge of Idolatry, we should presently deny our senses, and believe Transubstantiation; and if we do not believe this, they grant we have Reason to charge them with Idolatry.

But we own them to be a true Church; which they cannot be, if they be guilty of Idolatry: This they often urge us withal, and there seems at first sight to be something in it: And for that reason I shall endeavour to give so clear and satisfactory an answer to it, as that we may never more be troubled with it.

The truth is, we would fain hope, because they still retain the Essentials of Christianity, and profess to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, that notwithstanding their Corruptions they may still retain the true Essence of a Church: as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the Plague upon him; and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to themselves: But if this will not do, we cannot help it. Therefore to push the matter home; Are they sure that this is a firm and good consequence, *That if they be Idolaters, they cannot be a true Church?* Then let them look to it. It is they, I take it, that are concerned to prove themselves a true Church, and not we to prove it for them. And if they will not understand it of themselves, it is fit they should be told that there is a great difference between Concessions of Charity and of Necessity, and that a very different use ought to be made of them. We are willing to think the best of them; but if they dislike our Charity in this point, nothing against the hair: If they will forgive us this Injury, we will not offend them any more: But rather than have any farther difference with them about this matter, we will for quietness sake compound it thus; That till they can clearly acquit themselves from being Idolaters, they shall never more against their wills be esteemed a true Church.

And

And now to draw to a Conclusion.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, and to worship him only; to pray to him alone, and that only in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, as he hath given us Commandment; *because there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and Man, The Man Christ Jesus. If it seem evil unto you*, to have the liberty to serve God in a Language you can understand; and to have the free use of the Holy *Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto Salvation*: and to have the Sacraments of our Religion entirely administred to us, as our Lord did institute and appoint.

And on the other hand, if it seem good to us, to put our necks once more under that yoke, which our Fathers were not able to bear: If it be really a Preferment to a Prince to hold the Pope's Stirrup, and a Privilege to be deposed by him at his pleasure, and a courtesie to be kill'd at his command: If to pray without Understanding, and to obey without Reason, and to believe gainst Sense; if Ignorance, and implicit Faith, and an Inquisition, be in good earnest such charming and desirable things: Then welcome Popery; which, where-ever thou comest, dost infallibly bring all these wonderful Privileges and Blessings along with thee.

But, the Question is not now about the *choice*, but the *change* of our Religion, after we have been so long settled in the quiet possession and enjoyment of it. Men are very loth to change even a false Religion. *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods*? And surely there is much more reason why we should be tenacious of the Truth, and hold fast that which is good.

We have the best Religion in the World, the very same which *the Son of God* revealed, which the *Apostles* planted and confirmed by Miracles, and which the *noble Army of Martyrs* sealed with their Blood: And we have retrench'd from it all false Doctrines and superstitious Practices which have been added since. And I think we may without immodesty say, That upon the plain square of Scripture and Reason, of the Tradition and Practice of the first and best Ages of the Christian Church, we have fully justified *Our* Religion; and made it evident to the World, that our Adversaries are put to very hard shifts, and upon a perpetual disadvantage in the defence of *Theirs*.

I wish it were as easie for us to justifie our Lives as our Religion. I do not mean in comparison of our Adversaries (for that, as bad as we are, I hope we are yet able to do) but in comparison of the Rules of our holy *Religion*, from which we are infinitely swerv'd; which I would to God we all did seriously consider and lay to heart: I say, in comparison of the Rules of our Holy Religion, which *teach us to deny ungodliness and Worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World, in expectation of the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*; To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, *&c.*

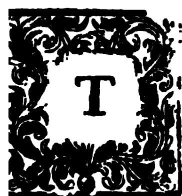
SERMON

SERMON XXVIII.

Objections against the true Religion answer'd.

Joshua xxiv. 15.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.



These words, as I have already declared in the former Discourse, are the last counsel and advice which *Joshua* gave to the People of *Israel*, after he had safely conducted them into the Land of *Canaan*. And that he might the more effectually perswade them to continue stedfast in the worship of the true God, by an eloquent kind of insinuation he doth as it were once more set them at liberty and leave them to their own choice; *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

The plain sense of which Words may be resolved into this *Proposition*, That notwithstanding all the prejudices and objections against the true Religion, yet it hath those real advantages on its side that it may safely be referred to any impartial and considerate man's choice; *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*; intimating that to some persons, and upon some accounts, it may seem so; but when the matter is throughly examined, the resolution and choice cannot be difficult, nor require any long deliberation, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

The true Religion hath always layn under some prejudices with partial and inconsiderate men arising chiefly from these *two* Causes; the *prepossessions of a false Religion*; and *the contrariety of the true Religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of Practice.*

First, *from the prepossessions of a false Religion*; which hath always been wont to lay claim to *Antiquity* and *Universality*, and to charge the true Religion with *Novelty* and *Singularity*. And both these are intimated before the Text; *put away the Gods whom your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood and in* Egypt, *and chuse you this day whom you will serve.* It was pretended that the worship of Idols was the ancient Religion of the World, of those great Nations, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and of all the Nations round about them. But this hath already been considered at large.

Secondly, There are another sort of Prejudices against Religion, more apt to stick with men of better sense and reason; and these arise principally from *the contrariety of the true Religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of practice.* It is pretended that Religion is a heavy yoke, and lays too great a restraint upon humane Nature, and that the Laws of it bear too hard upon the general inclinations of mankind.

I shall not at present meddle with the speculative Objections against Religion, upon account of the pretended unreasonableness of many things in point of belief: because the contrariety of the true Religion to the inclina-

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tions of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of practice, is that which in truth lies at the bottom of Atheism and Infidelity, and raises all that animosity which is in the minds of bad men against Religion, and exasperates them to oppose it with all their wit and malice: *Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* And if this prejudice were but once removed, and men were in some measure reconciled to the practice of Religion, the speculative Objections against it would almost vanish of themselves: for there wants little else to enable a man to answer them, but a willingness of mind to have them answered, and that we have no interest and inclination to the contrary. And therefore I shall at present wholly apply my self to remove this prejudice against Religion, from *the contrariety of it to the inclinations of men*, and *the uneasiness of it in point of practice.*

And there are two parts of this Objection.

1st. That a great part of the Laws of Religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reasonably be supposed to be from God. And,

2ly. That all of them together are a heavy yoke, and do lay too great a restraint upon humane Nature, intrenching too much upon the pleasures and liberty of it.

I. *That a great part of the Laws of Religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reasonably be supposed to be from God.* So that God seems to have set our nature and our duty at variance, to have given us appetites and inclinations one way, and Laws another: Which if it were true, must needs render the practice of Religion very grievous and uneasie.

The force of this Objection is very smartly expressed in those celebrated Verses of a Noble *Poet* of our own, which are so frequently in the mouths of many who are thought to bear no good will to Religion.

O wearisome condition of Humanity,
Born under one Law, to another bound;
Vainly begot, and yet forbidden Vanity;
Created sick, commanded to be sound.
If Nature did not take delight in blood,
She would have made more easie ways to good.

So that this Objection would fain charge the sins of men upon God; first upon account of the evil inclinations of our Nature; and then of the contrariety of our duty to those inclinations. And from the beginning man hath always been apt to lay the blame of his faults where it can least lie, upon goodness and perfection it self. The very first sin that ever man was guilty of he endeavoured to throw upon God: *The woman whom thou gavest me* (saith *Adam*) *she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* And his posterity are still apt to excuse themselves the same way. But to return a particular answer to this Objection.

1. We will acknowledge so much of it as is true; That there is a great degeneracy and corruption of humane Nature, from what it was originally framed when it came out of God's hands: of which the Scripture gives us this account, that it was occasioned by the voluntary transgression of a plain and easie Command given by God to our first Parents. And this weakness contracted by the fall of our first Parents naturally descends upon us their

Poſterity and viſibly diſcovers it ſelf in our inclinations to evil, and impotence to that which is good.

And of this the Heathen Philoſophers, from the light of nature, and their own experience and obſervation of themſelves and others, were very ſenſible; that humane Nature was very much declined from its primitive rectitude, and ſunk into a weak and drooping and ſickly State which they called a πτερορρύησις, the moulting of the wings of the ſoul: But yet they were ſo juſt and reaſonable as not to charge this upon God, but upon ſome corruption and impurity contracted by the Soul in a former State, before its union with the Body. For the deſcent of the Soul into theſe groſs earthly Bodies they looked upon as partly the puniſhment of faults committed in a former State, and partly as the opportunity of a new trial in order to its purgation and recovery. And this was the beſt account they were able to give of this matter, without the Light of Divine Revelation.

So that the degeneracy of humane Nature is univerſally acknowledged, and God acquitted from being the cauſe of it: But however, the poſterity of *Adam* do all partake of the weakneſs contracted by his fall, aud do ſtill labour under the miſeries and inconveniencies of it. But then this degeneracy is not total. For though our faculties be much weakned and diſordered, yet they are not deſtroyed nor wholly perverted. Our natural Judgment and Conſcience doth ſtill dictate to us what is good, and what we ought to do; and the impreſſions of the natural Law, as to the great lines of our duty, are ſtill legible upon our hearts. So that the Law written in God's Word is not contrary to the Law written upon our hearts. And therefore it is not truly ſaid, *that we are born under one Law and bound to another.* But the great diſorder is, that our inferiour faculties, our ſenſitive appetite and paſſions, are broke looſe and have got head of our Reaſon, and are upon all occaſions apt to rebell againſt it: but our Judgment ſtill dictates the very ſame things which the Law of God doth enjoyn.

It is likewiſe very viſible, that the ſad effects of this degeneracy do not appear equally and alike in all; whether from the better or worſe temper of our Bodies or from ſome other more ſecret cauſe, I ſhall not determine, becauſe I know not: But that there is a difference is evident. For though a proneneſs to evil, and ſome ſeeds of it be in all, yet we may plainly diſcover in many very early and forward inclinations to ſome kinds of vertue and goodneſs: which being cultivated by Education, may under the ordinary influence of God's grace be carried on with great eaſe to great perfection.

And there are others who are not ſo ſtrongly bent to that which is evil, but that by good inſtruction and example in their tender years they may be ſwayed the other way, and without great difficulty formed to goodneſs.

There are ſome indeed (which is the hardeſt caſe) in whom there do very early appear ſtrong propenſions and inclinations to evil, eſpecially to ſome particular kinds of vice: But the caſe of theſe is not deſperate; though greater attention and care, and a much more prudent management is required in the education of ſuch perſons to correct their evil tempers, and by degrees to bend their inclinations the right way: and if the ſeeds of piety and vertue be but carefully ſown at firſt, very much may be done by this means, even in the moſt depraved Natures, towards the altering and changing of them; however, to the checking and controuling of their vicious inclinations. And if theſe perſons, when they come to riper years, would purſue theſe advantages of education, and take ſome pains with

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themselves, and earnestly seek the assistance of God's grace, I doubt not but even these persons by degrees might at last get the mastery of their unhappy tempers.

For next to the Being and perfections of God, and the immortality of our own Souls, there is no Principle of Religion that I do more firmly believe than this, that God hath that love for men that if we do heartily beg his assistance, and be not wanting to our selves, he will afford it to every one of us in proportion to our need of it; that he is always beforehand with us, and prevents every man with the gracious offers of his help. And I doubt not but many very perverse Natures have thus been reclaimed. For God, who is the *Lover of Souls* (as the Son of *Sirach* calls him) though he may put some men under more difficult circumstances of becoming good than others, yet he leaves no man under a fatal necessity of being wicked and perishing everlastingly. He tenderly considers every man's case and circumstances, and it is we that pull destruction upon our selves, with the works of our own hands: But as sure as God is good and just, no man in the World is ruined for want of having sufficient help and aid afforded to him by God for his recovery.

2. It is likewise to be considered that God did not design to create man in the full Possession of happiness at first, but to train him up to it by the tryal of his obedience. But there could be no tryal of our Obedience without some difficulty in our duty: Either by reason of powerful temptations from without, or of cross and perverse inclinations from within.

Our first Parents, in their state of innocency, had only the tryal of temptation without; to which they yielded, and were overcome; having only a natural power to have resisted the temptation, without any aid of supernatural grace: And that weakness to good, and proneness to evil, which they by wilful transgression contracted, is naturally derived to us; and we necessarily partake of the bitterness and impurity of the Fountain from whence we spring. So that we now labour under a double difficulty; being assaulted by temptations from without, and incited by evil inclinations from within: But then, to balance these, we have a double advantage; that a greater reward is proposed to us, than for ought we know would have been conferred on our first Parents had they continued innocent; and that we are endued with a supernatural power to conflict with these difficulties. So that, according to the merciful dispensation of God, all this conflict between our inclination and our duty does only serve to give a fairer opportunity for the fitting tryal of our obedience, and for the more glorious reward of it.

3. God hath provided an universal remedy for this degeneracy and weakness of humane Nature: So that what we lost by the first *Adam* is abundantly repaired to us by the second. This St. *Paul* tells us at large, *Rom.* 5. That *as by one man sin entred into the World, and death by sin; so the grace of God hath abounded to all men by Jesus Christ*; And that to such a degree, as effectually to countervail the ill effects of original sin, and really to enable men, if they be not wanting to themselves, to master and subdue all the bad inclinations of nature, even in those who seem to be naturally most corrupt and depraved.

And if this be true, we may without any reflection upon God acknowledge, that though he did not at first *create* man *sick* and *weak*, yet he having made himself so, his posterity are born so. But then God hath not left us helpless in this weak and miserable State, into which by wilful transgression mankind is fallen: But as he commands us to be

found, so he affords us sufficient aids of his grace by Jesus Christ for our recovery.

And though *there is a Law in our Members warring against the Law of our Minds, and captivating us to the Law of Sin and Death*; *i. e.* though our sensitive appetite and passions are apt to rebell against the reason of our minds and the dictates of our natural Conscience, yet every Christian may say with St. *Paul*, *Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*, *i. e.* hath not left us destitute of a sufficient aid and strength to enable us to conquer the rebellious motions of sin, by the powerful assistance of that grace which is so plentifully offered to us in the Gospel. And this is the case of all those who live under the Gospel: As for others, as their case is best known to God, so we have no reason to doubt but that his infinite goodness and mercy takes that care of them which becomes *a merciful Creator*: Though both the measures, and the methods of his mercy towards them are secret and unknown to us.

4. The hardest contest between man's inclination and duty, is in those who have wilfully contracted vicious habits, and by that means, rendred their duty much more difficult to themselves: having greatly improved the evil inclinations of nature by wicked practice and custom. For the *Scripture* plainly supposeth, that men may debauch even corrupt nature, and make themselves ten-fold more the Children of Wrath and of the Devil than they were by nature.

This is a case sadly to be deplored, but yet not utterly to be despaired of. And therefore those who by a long progress in an evil course, are plunged into this sad condition, ought to consider that they are not to be rescued out of it by an ordinary resolution, and a common grace of God. Their case plainly requires an extraordinary remedy. For he that is deeply engaged in vice is like a man laid fast in a bogg, who by a faint and lazy struggling to get out, does but spend his strength to no purpose, and sinks himself the deeper into it: The only way is, by a resolute and vigorous effort to spring out, if possible, at once. And therefore in this case, to a vigorous resolution there must be joyned an earnest application to God for his powerful grace and assistance, to help us out of this miserable State. And if we be truly sensible of the desperate danger of our condition, the pressing necessity of our case will be apt to inspire us with a mighty resolution. For *power and necessity are neighbours*, and never dwell far asunder. When men are sorely urged and pressed, they find a power in themselves which they thought they had not. Like a coward driven up to a wall, who in the extremity of distress and despair will fight terribly and perform wonders: or like a man lame of the Gout, who being assaulted by a present and terrible danger forgets his Disease, and will find his legs rather than lose his life.

And in this, I do not speak above the rate of humane Nature, and what men throughly roused and awakened to a sense of their danger, by a mighty resolution may morally do, through that Divine grace and assistance which is ever ready to be afforded to well resolved minds, and such as are sincerely bent to return to God and their Duty. More than this I cannot say for the encouragement of those who have proceeded far in an evil course: And they who have made their case so very desperate, ought to be very thankful to God that there is any remedy left for them.

5. From

5. From all that hath been ſaid, it evidently appears, how malicious a ſuggeſtion it is, that God ſeeks the deſtruction of men, and hath made his Laws on purpoſe ſo difficult and croſs to our inclinations that he might have an advantage to ruin us for our diſobedience to them. Alas, we are ſo abſolutely under the Power of God, and ſo unable to withſtand it, that he may deſtroy us when he pleaſeth, without ſeeking pretences for it: *For who hath reſiſted his will?* If goodneſs were not his nature, he hath power enough to bear out whatever he hath a mind to do to us. But our deſtruction is plainly of our ſelves, and God is free from the blood of all men. And he hath not made the way to Eternal Life ſo difficult to any of us, with a deſign to make us miſerable, but that we by a vigorous reſolution, and unwearied diligence, and a patient continuance in well-doing, might win and wear a more glorious Crown, and be fit to receive a more ample reward from his bounty and goodneſs: yea, in ſome ſenſe, I may ſay, from his Juſtice; *For God is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour and love.* He will fully conſider all the pains that any of us take in his ſervice, and all the difficulties that we ſtruggle with out of love to God and goodneſs. So that this Objection, from the claſhing of our duty with our inclination, is I hope fully anſwered: Since God hath provided ſo powerful and effectual a remedy againſt our natural impotency and infirmity, by the Grace of the Goſpel.

And though to thoſe who have wilfully contracted vicious habits a religious and vertuous courſe of life be very difficult, yet the main difficulty lies in our firſt entrance upon it; and when that is over, the ways of goodneſs are as eaſie as it is fit any thing ſhould be that is ſo excellent, and that hath the encouragement of ſo glorious a reward. Cuſtom will reconcile Men almoſt to any thing; but there are thoſe charms in the ways of wiſdom and vertue, that a little acquaintance and converſation with them will ſoon make them more delightful than any other courſe. And who will grudge any pains and trouble to bring himſelf into ſo ſafe and happy a condition? After we have tryed both courſes, of Religion and Profaneneſs, of Virtue and Vice, we ſhall certainly find, that nothing is ſo wiſe, ſo eaſie and ſo comfortable as to be virtuous and good, and always to do that which we are inwardly convinced we ought to do. Nor would I deſire more of any Man in this matter, than to follow the ſobereſt convictions of his own mind, and to do that which upon the moſt ſerious conſideration at all times, in proſperity and affliction, in ſickneſs and health, in the time of life, and at the hour of death, he judgeth wiſeſt and ſafeſt for him to do. I proceed to the

II. Branch of the Objection, *That the Laws of Religion* (and particularly, of the *Chriſtian Religion) are a heavy yoke, laying too great a reſtraint upon humane nature, and entrenching too much upon the pleaſures and liberty of it.*

There was, I confeſs, ſome pretence for this Objection againſt the *Jewiſh* Religion: which by the multitude of its poſitive Inſtitutions and external Obſervances muſt needs have been very burthenſome. And the ſame Objection lies againſt the Church of *Rome*, who (as they have handled Chriſtianity) by the unreaſonable number of their needleſs and ſenſeleſs Ceremonies, have made the Yoke of *Chriſt* heavier than that of *Moſes*, and the *Goſpel* a more carnal Commandment than the *Law*. So that *Chriſtianity* is loſt among them in the trappings and accouterments of it; with which inſtead of adorning Religion they have ſtrangely diſguiſed

disguised it, and quite stifled it in the crowd of external Rites and Ceremonies.

But the pure Christian Religion, as it was delivered by our Saviour, hath hardly any thing in it that is positive; except the two Sacraments, which are not very troublesome neither, but very much for our comfort and advantage, because they convey and confirm to us the great blessings and priviledges of our Religion. In other things, Christianity hath hardly imposed any other Laws upon us but what are enacted in our Natures, or are agreeable to the prime and fundamental Laws of it; nothing but what every man's reason either dictates to him to be necessary, or approves as highly fit and reasonable.

But we do most grosly mistake the nature of pleasure and liberty, if we promise them to our selves in any evil and wicked course. For, upon due search and tryal it will be found, that true pleasure, and perfect freedom, are no-where to be found but in the practice of vertue, and in the service of God. The Laws of Religion do not abridge us of any pleasure that a wise man can desire, and safely enjoy, I mean without a greater evil and trouble consequent upon it. The pleasure of commanding our appetites, and governing our passions, by the rules of Reason (which are the Laws of God) is infinitely to be preferred before any sensual pleasure whatsoever: Because it is the pleasure of wisdom and discretion; and gives us the satisfaction of having done that which is best and fittest for reasonable Creatures to do. Who would not rather chuse to govern himself as *Scipio* did, amidst all the temptations and opportunities of sensual pleasure which his power and victories presented to him, than to wallow in all the delights of sense?

Nothing is more certain in reason and experience, than that every inordinate appetite and affection is a punishment to it self; and is perpetually crossing its own pleasure, and defeating its own satisfaction, by over-shooting the mark it aims at. For instance, *Intemperance* in eating and drinking, instead of delighting and satisfying nature, doth but load and cloy it; and instead of quenching a natural thirst, which it is extreamly pleasant to do, creates an unnatural one, which is troublesome and endless. The pleasure of *Revenge*, as soon as it is executed turns into grief and pity, guilt and remorse, and a thousand melancholy wishes that we had restrained our selves from so unreasonable an Act. And the same is as evident in other sensual excesses, not so fit to be described. We may trust *Epicurus* for this, that there can be no true pleasure without temperance in the use of pleasure. And God and Reason have set us no other bounds concerning the use of sensual pleasures, but that we take care not to be injurious to our selves, or others, in the kind, or degree of them. And it is very visible, that all sensual excess is naturally attended with a double inconvenience: As it goes beyond the limits of nature, it begets bodily pains and diseases: As it transgresseth the Rules of Reason and Religion, it breeds guilt and remorse in the mind. And these are, beyond comparison, the two greatest evils in this world; a diseased body, and a discontented mind; And in this I am sure I speak to the inward feeling and experience of men; and say nothing but what every vicious man finds, and hath a more lively sense of, than is to be expressed by words.

When all is done, there is no pleasure comparable to that of Innocency, and freedom from the stings of a guilty conscience; This is a pure and spiritual pleasure, much above any sensual delight. And yet among all the delights of sense, that of health (which is the natural consequent of a sober,

and chaste, and regular life) is a sensual pleasure far beyond that of any Vice: For it is the life of life; and that which gives a grateful relish to all our other enjoyments. It is not indeed so violent and transporting a pleasure, but it is pure and even, and lasting, and hath no guilt and regret, no sorrow and trouble in it, or after it: which is a worm that infallibly breeds in all vicious and unlawful pleasures, and makes them to be bitterness in the end.

All the ways of sin are so beset with thorns and difficulties on every side, there are so many unanswerable objections against Vice, from the unreasonableness and ugliness of it, from the remorse that attends it, from the endless misery that follows it, that none but the rash and inconsiderate can obtain leave of themselves to commit it. It is the Daughter of inadvertency, and blindness and folly; and the Mother of guilt, and repentance, and woe. There is no pleasure that will hold out and abide with us to the last, but that of Innocency and well-doing. All sin is folly; and as *Seneca* truly says, *omnis stultitia laborat fastidio sui; All folly soon grows sick and weary of it self.* The pleasure of it is slight and superficial, but the trouble and remorse of it pierceth our very hearts.

And then as to the other part of the Objection, *That Religion restrains us of our liberty*: The contrary is evidently true, that sin and vice are the greatest slavery. For he is truly a slave, who is not at liberty to follow his own judgment, and to do those things which he is inwardly convinced it is best for him to do; but is subject to the unreasonable commands, and the tyrannical power and violence of his lusts and passions: So that he is not master of himself, but other Lords have got dominion over him, and he is perfectly at their beck and command. One vice or passion bids him go, and he goes; another come, and he comes; and a third do this, and he doth it. The man is at perpetual variance with his own mind, and continually committing the things which he condemns in himself. And it is all one, whether a man be subject to the will and humour of another person, or to his own lusts and passions. Only this of the two is the worse; because the Tyrant is at home, and always ready at hand to domineer over him; he is got within him, and so much the harder to be vanquish'd and overcome.

But the service of God, and obedience to his Laws is perfect liberty. Because the Law of God requires nothing of us, but what is recommended to us by our own reason, and from the benefit and advantage of doing it: nothing but what is much more for our own interest to do it, than it can be for God's to command it. And if in some things God exacts obedience of us more indispensibly, and under severer penalties, it is because those things are in their Nature more necessary to our felicity. And how could God possibly have dealt more graciously and kindly with us, than to oblige us most strictly to that which is most evidently for our good; and to make such Laws for us, as if we live in obedience to them will infallibly make us happy? So that taking all things into consideration, the interest of our bodies and our souls, of the present and the future, of this world and the other, Religion is the most reasonable and wise, the most comfortable and compendious course that any man can take in order to his own happiness.

The consideration whereof ought to be a mighty endearment of our duty to us, and a most prevalent argument with us to yield a ready and chearful obedience to the Laws of God; which are in truth so many acts of grace and favour to mankind, the real privileges of our nature, and the proper means

and

and causes of our happiness: And do restrain us from nothing but from doing mischief to our selves, from playing the fools and making our selves miserable.

And therefore instead of opposing Religion, upon pretence of the unreasonable restraints of it, we ought to thank God heartily, that he hath laid so strict an obligation upon us to regard and pursue our true interest; and hath been pleased to take that care of us, as to set bounds to our loose and wild appetites by our duty; and in giving us rules to live by, hath no ways complyed with our inconsiderate and foolish inclinations, to our real harm and prejudice: But hath made those things necessary for us to do, which in all respects are best for us; and which, if we were perfectly left to our own liberty, ought in all reason to be our free and first choice: And hath made the folly and inconvenience of sin so grosly palpable, that every man may see it before-hand that will but consider, and at the beginning of a bad course look to the end of it; and they that will not consider, shall be forced from woful experience at last to acknowledge it, when they find the dismal effects and mischievous consequences of their vices still meeting them at one turn or other.

And now, by all that hath beeen said upon this Argument, I hope we are satisfied that Religion is no such intolerable yoke; and that upon a due and full consideration of things it cannot *seem evil* unto any of us *to serve the Lord*: nay, on the contrary, that it is absolutely necessary, both to our present peace and our future felicity: And that a religious and vertuous life is not only upon all accounts the most prudent, but after we are entred upon it, and accustomed to it, the most pleasant course that any man can take: and however inconsiderate men may complain of the restraints of Religion that it is not one jot more our duty, than it is our privilege and our happiness.

And I cannot think that upon sober consideration any man could see reason to thank God to be released from any of his Laws, or to have had the contrary to them enjoyned. Let us suppose, that the Laws of God had been just the *Reverse* of what they now are; that he had commanded us, under severe penalties, to deal falsly and fraudulently with our neighbour; to demean our selves ungratefully to our best friends and benefactors; to be drunk every day, and to pursue sensual pleasures to the endangering of our health and life: How should we have complained of the unreasonableness of these Laws, and have murmured at the slavery of such intolerable impositions? And yet now that God hath commanded us the contrary, things every way agreeable to our reason and interest, we are not pleased neither. What will content us? As our Saviour expostulates in a like case, *Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto Children playing in the Market-place, and calling unto their Companions, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not lamented.* This is perfectly childish, to be pleased with nothing; neither to like this, nor the contrary. We are not contented with the Laws of God as they are, and yet the contrary to them we should have esteemed the greatest grievance in the World.

And if this be true that the Laws of God, how contrary soever to our vicious inclinations, are really calculated for our benefit and advantage, it would almost be an affront to wise and considerate men to importune them to their interest; and with great earnestness to perswade them to that which in all respects is so visibly for their advantage, *Chuse you* therefore *this day whom you will serve*; God, or your lusts. And take up a

speedy

speedy resolution in a matter of so great and pressing a concernment; chuse you *this day*.

Where there is great hazard in the doing of a thing, it is good to deliberate long before we undertake it: but where the thing is not only safe but beneficial, and not only hugely beneficial but highly necessary; when our life and our happiness depends upon it, and all the danger lies in the delay of it; there we cannot be too sudden in our resolution, nor too speedy in the execution of it. That which is evidently safe, needs no deliberation; and that which is absolutely necessary will admit of none.

Therefore resolve upon it out of hand; *To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* In the days of your youth and health; for *that is the acceptable time*, that is *the day of salvation:* Before the *evil day comes*, and you be driven to it by the terrible apprehension and approach of death, when men fly to God only for fear of his wrath. For the greatest Atheists and Infidels, (when they come to dye, if they have any of that reason left, which they have used so ill) have commonly right opinions about God and Religion. For then the confidence as well as the comfort of Atheism leaves them, as the Devil uses to do Witches when they are in distress. Then with *Nebuchadnezzar*, when they are recovered from being beasts, they look up to heaven and their understanding returns to them: Then they believe a God, and cannot help it; they believe, and tremble at the thoughts of him. Thus *Lucretius*, one of their *great Authors* observes, that when men are in distress,

Acrius advertunt animos ad Religionem.

The thoughts of Religion are then more quick and pungent upon their minds.

Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Eliciuntur, & eripitur persona, manet res.

Mens words then come from the bottom of their hearts; the mask is taken off, and things then appear as in truth they are.

But then perhaps it may be too late to make this choice: Nay, then it can hardly be choice, but necessity. Men do not then chuse to serve the Lord but they are urged and forced to it by their fears. They have served their lusts all their life long, and now they would fain serve themselves of God at the hour of death. They have done what they can, by their insolent contempt and defiance of the Almighty, to make themselves miserable; and now that they can stand out no longer against him, they are contented at last to be beholding to him to make them happy. The mercies of God are vast and boundless, but yet methinks it is too great a presumption in all reason, for men to design before-hand to make the mercy of God the sanctuary and retreat of a sinful life.

To draw then to a Conclusion of this Discourse. If safety, or pleasure, or liberty, or wisdom, or vertue, or even happiness it self have any temptation in them, Religion hath all these baits and allurements. What *Tully* says of *Philosophy* is much more true of the *Christian Religion*, the Wisdom and Philosophy which is from above; *Nunquam satis laudari poterit, cui qui pareat, omne tempus ætatis sine molestia degere possit. We can never praise it enough, since whoever lives according to the rules of it, may pass the whole age of* his

his life (I may add, his whole duration, this life and the other) *without trouble.*

Philosophy hath given us several plausible rules for the attaining of peace and tranquility of mind, but they fall very much short of bringing men to it. The very best of them fail us upon the greatest occasions. But the *Christian Religion* hath effectually done all that which *Philosophy* pretended to, and aimed at. The Precepts and Promises of the Holy Scriptures are every way sufficient for our comfort, and for our instruction in righteousness: to correct all the errors, and to bear us up under all the evils and adversities of humane life; especially that holy and heavenly Doctrine which is contained in the admirable Sermons of our Saviour, *Quem cum legimus, quem Philosophum non contemnimus?* whose excellent Discourses when we read, what Philosopher do we not despise? None of the *Philosophers* could, upon sure grounds, give that encouragement to their *Scholars* which our *Saviour* does to his *Disciples*; *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easie, and my burthen is light.*

This is the advantage of the *Christian Religion* sincerely believed and practised, that it gives perfect rest and tranquility to the mind of man: It frees us from the guilt of an evil conscience, and from the power of our lusts, and from the slavish fear of death, and of the vengeance of another world. It builds our comfort upon a rock, which will abide all storms, and remain unshaken in every condition, and will last and hold out for ever: *He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them* (saith our *Lord*) *I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock.*

In short, Religion makes the life of man a wise design, regular and constant to its self; because it unites all our resolutions and actions in one great end: Whereas without Religion the life of man is a wild, and fluttering and inconsistent thing, without any certain scope and design. The vicious man lives at random, and acts by chance: For he that walks by no rule can carry on no settled and steady design. It would pity a man's heart to see, how hard such men are put to it for diversion, and what a burden time is to them; and how solicitous they are to devise ways, not to spend it but to squander it away. For their great grievance is consideration, and to be obliged to be intent upon any thing that is serious. They hurry from one vanity and folly to another; and plunge themselves into drink, not to quench their thirst, but their guilt: and are beholding to every vain man, and to every trifling occasion, that can but help to take time off their hands. Wretched and inconsiderate men! who have so vast a work before them, the happiness of all eternity to take care of, and provide for, and yet are at a loss how to employ their time! So that Irreligion and Vice makes life an extravagant and unnatural thing, because it perverts and overthrows the natural course and order of things. For instance; according to nature men labour to get an Estate, to free themselves from temptations to rapine and injury; and that they may have wherewithal to supply their own wants, and to relieve the needs of others. But now the covetous man heaps up Riches, not to enjoy them, but to have them; and starves himself in the midst of plenty, and most unnaturally cheats and robs himself of that which is his own; and makes a hard shift to be as poor and miserable with a great Estate, as any man can be without it. According to the design of nature, men should eat and drink that they may live; but the voluptuous man only lives that he may eat and drink. Nature in all sensual enjoyments designs pleasure, which may certainly be had within the limits of vertue: But vice

rashly

rashly pursues pleasure into the enemies quarters; and never stops, till the sinner be surrounded and seized upon by pain and torment.

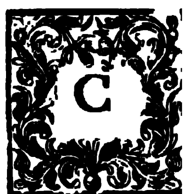
So that take away God and Religion, and men live to no purpose; without proposing any worthy and considerable end of life to themselves. Whereas the fear of God, and the care of our immortal Souls, fixeth us upon one great design, to which our whole life, and all the actions of it are ultimately referr'd, *Ubi unus Deus colitur* (saith *Lactantius*) *ibi vita, & omnis actus, ad unum caput, & ad unam summam refertur*; When we acknowledge God as the Author of our Being, as our Sovereign, and our Judge, our end and our happiness is then fixed; and we can have but one reasonable design, and that is, by endeavouring to please God to gain his favour and protection in this World, and to arrive at the blissful enjoyment of him in the other: *In whose presence is fulness of joy; and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.* To Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXIX.

Of the Difficulty of reforming Vicious Habits.

Jeremiah xiii. 23.

Can the Æthiopian change his Skin or the Leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.



Onsidering the great difficulty of reclaiming those who are far gone in an evil course, it is no more than needs to use all sorts of Arguments to this purpose: From the consideration of the evil of sin, and of the goodness of God and his wonderful patience and long-suffering towards us in the midst of our infinite Provocations: From his great mercy and pity declared to us in all those gracious means and methods which he useth for our recovery: And from his readiness and forwardness after all our Rebellions to receive us upon our Repentance, and to be perfectly reconciled to us as if we had never offended him: And from the final issue and event of a wicked life, the dismal and endless miseries of another World, into which we shall inevitably fall, except we repent in time and return to a better mind: And lastly, from the danger of being hardened in an evil course, past all remedy and hopes of Repentance.

And yet I am very sensible that to discourse to Men of the impossibility, or at least the extream difficulty of rescuing themselves out of this miserable state seems to be an odd and cross kind of Argument, and more apt to drive people to despair than to gain them to repentance.

But since the Spirit of God is pleased to make use of it to this purpose, we may safely rely upon infinite Wisdom for the fitness of it to awaken sinners to a sense of their Condition, in order to their recovery. For here in the Text, after terrible Threatnings of Captivity and Desolation to the People of the *Jews*, who were extreamly wicked and degenerate, through an universal depravation of manners in all Ranks of men from the highest to the lowest, so that they seemed to stand upon the brink of ruine, and to be fatally devoted to it; to add to the terrour and force of these threatnings, God by his Prophet represents to them the infinite danger and extream difficulty of their case, to see if he could startle them by telling them into what a desperate condition they had plunged themselves; being by a long custom of sinning so far engaged in an evil course, that they had almost cut off themselves from a possibility of retreat; so that the difficulty of their change seem'd next to a natural impossibility. *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.*

The expression is very high, and it is to be hoped somewhat Hyperbolical, and above the just meaning of the words. Which are, I think, only de-

designed to signifie to us the extream difficulty of making this change; which is therefore resembled to a natural impossibility, as coming very near it, though not altogether up to it.

And that this Expression is thus to be mitigated, will appear more than probable, by considering some other like passages of Scripture. As, where our Saviour compares the difficulty of a rich Man's Salvation to that which is naturally impossible, *viz.* to *a Camel's passing through the Eye of a Needle:* Nay, he pitcheth his expression higher, and doth not only make it a thing of equal but of greater difficulty; *I say, unto you, it is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* And yet when he comes to explain this to his Disciples, he tells them that he only meant that the thing was very difficult, *how hard is it for those that have riches to be saved?* and that it was not absolutely impossible, but speaking according to humane probability: *with men this is impossible but not with God.*

And thus also it is reasonable to understand that severe passage of the Apostle, *Heb.* 6. 4. *It is impossible for them that were once enlightned, if they fall away, to renew them again to Repentance. It is impossible,* that is, it is very difficult.

In like manner we are to understand this high Expression in the Text, *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil;* that is, this moral change of men, settled and fixed in bad habits, is almost as difficult as the other.

From the words thus explained *two* things will properly fall under our Consideration.

First, The great difficulty of reforming vicious habits or of changing a bad course, to those who have been deeply engaged in it and long accustomed to it.

Secondly, Notwithstanding the great difficulty of the thing, what ground of hope and encouragement there is left that it may be done. So that notwithstanding the appearing harshness of the Text, the result of my discourse will be, not to discourage any, how bad soever, from attempting this change, but to put them upon it, and to perswade them to it; and to remove out of the way that which may seem to be one of the strongest objections against all endeavours of men very bad, to become better.

I. *First,* The great difficulty of reforming vicious habits, or of changing a bad course, to those who have been deeply engaged in it and long accustomed to it. And this difficulty ariseth, partly from the general nature of habits indifferently considered whether they be good, or bad, or indifferent; partly, from the particular nature of evil and vicious habits; and partly, from the natural and judicial consequences of a great Progress and long continuance in an evil Course. By the consideration of these three particulars, the extreme difficulty of this change, together with the true causes and reasons of it, will fully appear.

1. If we consider the nature of all Habits, whether good, or bad, or indifferent. The custom and frequent practice of any thing begets in us a Faculty and easiness in doing it. It bends the powers of our Soul, and turns the stream and current of our animal spirits such a way, and gives all our faculties a tendency and pliableness to such a sort of actions. And when we have long stood bent one way, we grow settled and confirmed in it; and cannot without great force and violence be restored to

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our former ſtate and condition. For the perfection of any habit, whether good, or bad, induceth a kind of neceſſity of acting accordingly. A rooted habit becomes a governing Principle, and bears almoſt an equal ſway in us with that which is natural. It is a kind of a new nature ſuperinduced, and even as hard to be expelled as ſome things which are Primitively and Originally natural. When we bend a thing at firſt it will endeavour to reſtore it ſelf; but it may be held bent ſo long till it will continue ſo of it ſelf and grow crooked; and then it may require more force and violence to reduce it to its former ſtraightneſs than we uſed to make it crooked at firſt. This is the nature of all habits, the farther we proceed the more we are confirmed in them: and that which at firſt we did voluntarily, by degrees becomes ſo natural and neceſſary that it is almoſt impoſſible for us to do otherwiſe. This is plainly ſeen in the experience of every day, in things good and bad, both in leſſer and greater matters.

2. This difficulty ariſeth more eſpecially from the particular nature of evil and vicious habits. Theſe, becauſe they are ſuitable to our corrupt nature, and conſpire with the inclinations of it, are likely to be of a much quicker growth and improvement, and in a ſhorter ſpace, and with leſs care and endeavour, to arrive at maturity and ſtrength, than the habits of grace and goodneſs. Conſidering the propenſion of our depraved nature, the progreſs of vertue and goodneſs is up the hill, in which we not only move hardly and heavily, but are eaſily roll'd back: but by wickedneſs and vice we move downwards; which, as it is much quicker and eaſier, ſo it is harder for us to ſtop in that courſe, and infinitely more difficult to return from it.

Not but that at firſt a ſinner hath ſome conſiderable checks and reſtraints upon him, and meets with ſeveral rubs, and difficulties in his way; the ſhame and unreaſonableneſs of his vices, and the trouble and diſquiet which they create to him: But he breaks looſe from theſe reſtraints, and gets over theſe difficulties by degrees: and the faſter and farther he advanceth in an evil courſe the leſs trouble ſtill they give him, till at laſt they almoſt quite loſe their force, and give him little or no diſturbance.

Shame alſo is a great reſtraint upon ſinners at firſt, but that ſoon falls off: and when men have once loſt their innocence, their modeſty is not like to be long troubleſome to them. For impudence comes on with vice, and grows up with it. Leſſer vices do not baniſh all ſhame and modeſty, but great and abominable crimes harden mens foreheads and make them ſhameleſs. *Were they aſhamed* (ſaith the *Prophet*) *when they committed abomination, nay they were not aſhamed, neither could they bluſh.* When men have the heart to do a very bad thing, they ſeldom want the face to bear it out.

And as for the *unreaſonableneſs* of vice, though nothing in the World be more evident to a free and impartial judgment, and the ſinner himſelf diſcerns it clearly enough at his firſt ſetting out in a wicked courſe:

------*Video meliora, proboque,*
Deteriora ſequor.

He offends againſt the light of his own mind, and does wickedly when he knows better: yet after he hath continued for ſome time in this courſe, and is heartily engaged in it, his fooliſh heart is darken'd, and the notions of good and evil are obſcured and confounded, and things appear to him in a falſe and imperfect light: His luſts do at once blind and byaſs his underſtanding; and his judgment by degrees goes over to his inclinations;

and he cannot think that there should be so much reason against those things for which he hath so strong an affection. He is now engaged in a Party, and factiously concerned to maintain it, and to make the best of it; and to that end, he bends all his wits to advance such principles as are fittest to justifie his wicked practices; and in all debates plainly favours that side of the Question which will give the greatest countenance and encouragement to them. When men *are corrupt and do abominable works*, they *say in their hearts there is no God*; that is, they would fain think so. And every thing serves for an Argument to a willing mind; and every little objection appears strong and considerable, which makes against that which men are loth should be true.

Not that any man ever satisfied himself in the Principles of Infidelity, or was able to arrive to a steady and unshaken persuasion of the truth of them, so as not vehemently to doubt and fear the contrary. However, by this means many men though they cannot fully comfort, yet they make a shift to cheat themselves; to still their Consciences and lay them asleep for a time, so as not to receive any great and frequent disturbance in their course from the checks and rebukes of their own minds. And when these restraints are removed, the work of iniquity goes on a-main, being favoured both by wind and tide.

3. The difficulty of this change ariseth likewise from the natural and judicial consequences of a great progress and long continuance in an evil course. My meaning is, that inveterate evil habits do partly from their own nature, and partly from the just judgment and permission of God, put men under several disadvantages of moving effectually towards their own recovery.

By a long custom of sinning mens Consciences grow brawny, and *seared as it were with a hot iron*; and by being often trampled upon they become hard as the beaten road. So that unless it be upon some extraordinary occasion, they are seldom awakened to a sense of their guilt. And when mens hearts are thus hard, the best counsels make but little impression upon them. For they are steel'd against reproof, and impenetrable to good advice; which is therefore seldom offered to them, even by those that wish them well, because they know it to be both unacceptable, and unlikely to prevail. It requires a great deal of good nature in a very bad man, to be able patiently to bear to be told of his faults.

Besides, that habitual wickedness is naturally apt to banish consideration, to weaken our resolution, and to discourage our hopes both of God's grace and assistance, and of his mercy and forgiveness, which are the best means and encouragement to repentance.

Sin is a great enemy to *Consideration*; and especially when men are deeply plunged into it, their condition is so very bad, that they are loth to think of it and to search into it. A vicious man is a very deformed sight, and to none more than to himself; and therefore he loves to turn his Eyes another way, and to divert them as much as he can from looking upon himself. He is afraid to be alone, lest his own mind should arrest him, and his Conscience should take the opportunity to call him to an account. And if at any time his own thoughts meet with him, and he cannot avoid consideration, he is ready to say as *Ahab* did to *Elijah*, *Hast thou found me, O my enemy!* and is as glad to shake it off as a man is to get rid of a Creditor, whom because he knows not how to satisfie, he cares not to speak with him. Consideration is the great troubler and disturber of men in an evil course, because it would represent to them the plain truth of their case; and

and therefore they do all they can to keep it off, as those who have improvidently managed their affairs, and been ill husbands of their estates, are loth to make up their accounts, lest by that means they should be forced to understand the worst of their condition.

Or if consideration happen to take them at an advantage, and they are so hard prest by it that they cannot escape the sight of their own condition, yet they find themselves so miserably entangled and hamper'd in an evil course, and bound so fast in the chains of their own wickedness, that they know not how to get loose. Sin is the saddest slavery in the World; it breaks and sinks mens Spirits, and makes them so base and servile that they have not the courage to rescue themselves. No sort of slaves are so poor spirited as they that are in bondage to their lusts. Their power is gone, or if they have any left they have not the heart to make use of it. And though they see and feel their Misery, yet they chuse rather to sit down in it, and tamely to submit to it, than to make any resolute attempt for their Liberty. What the Prophet says of *Whoredom* and *Wine* is proportionably true of other vices, *they take away the heart.* Every lust that we entertain deals with us as *Dalilah* did with *Sampson*, not only robs us of our strength but leaves us fast bound: so that if at any time we be awakened to a sense of our condition, and try to rescue our selves from it, we find that *our strength is departed from us*, and that we are not able to break loose.

And as long custom and continuance in sin deprives us of our strength, so it discourageth our hopes, both of God's grace and assistance, and of his mercy and forgiveness. For why should men expect the continuance of that grace which they have so often received in vain? After so many provocations, how can we look the offended Majesty of God in the Face? how can we lift up our eyes to heaven with any hopes of mercy and forgiveness there? Despair doth almost naturally spring from an evil Conscience; and when men are thoroughly awakened to a sense of sin, and of the infinite evil of it, as they cannot easily forgive themselves, so they can hardly believe that there is goodness enough any where to forgive them.

But besides these disadvantages, which are natural and consequent upon a vicious course; by the just judgment of God, his Spirit is withdrawn from them, and they are given up to their own hearts lusts, to commit all iniquity with greediness. And then there is hardly any thing left, either to restrain them in their evil course, or to recover them out of it.

And not only so, but by the just permission of God, as men grow worse and more wicked, the Devil hath a nearer access to them and a more immediate power over them. So the *Scripture* tells us, that wicked men are *led captive by Satan at his pleasure*, and that the *evil one works* and acts *in the Children of disobedience*: They are as it were possest and inspired by him. And what can be expected from this cruel and malicious enemy of mankind, but that he will continually be pushing them on from one wickedness to another. till he drive them first into despair, and then, if God permit him, into eternal perdition?

And what a forlorn state is this? when men are thus forsaken of God, and left without check, blindly and headily to follow the sway of their own tempers, and the bent of their own corrupt hearts? when they are continually exposed to temptations strongly inviting them to evil; and God lets the Devil loose upon them to manage those temptations with his utmost skill, and to practise all his arts and wiles upon them? In these circumstances men almost infallibly run into sin, as sure as men wander in the dark, and are in danger of falling in slippery places, and of being entangled

when they continually walk in the midst of snares cunningly laid for them. It is not in men thus disabled and entangled, to order their own steps, and to restrain their inclinations and passions in the presence of a powerful temptation. At the best, we need God's direction to guide us, his continual grace to uphold us, and to guard and preserve us from evil; and much more do we stand in need of it, when we have brought our selves into these wretched circumstances; but then alas! how little reason have we to hope for it?

Blind and miserable men! that in despite of all the merciful warnings of God's word and providence, will run themselves into this desperate state, and never think of returning to a better mind, till their retreat is difficult almost to an impossibility. I proceed to the

II. Head of my Discourse, which was to shew that the case of these persons, though it be extreamly difficult, is not quite desperate; but after all, there is some ground of hope and encouragement left that they may yet be reclaimed and brought to goodness. Indeed humanely speaking, and according to all appearance and probability, the thing seems to be very hopeless, and next to an impossibility; but yet what our *Saviour* says concerning the difficulty of a rich man's Salvation will reach also to this case, though much more difficult; *those things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* II.

And this will appear, if we consider that even in the worst of men there is something left which tends to reclaim them, to awaken them to consideration, and to urge and encourage them to a vigorous resolution of a better course: And this accompanied with a powerful assistance of God's grace, which when sincerely sought is never to be despaired of, may prove effectual to bring back even the greatest of sinners.

1. There is left, even in the worst of men, a natural sense of the evil and unreasonableness of sin; which can hardly be ever totally extinguished in humane nature. For though the habits of great vices are very apt to harden and stupifie men. so that they have seldom a just sense of their evil ways, yet these persons are sometimes under strong convictions, and their consciences do severely check and rebuke them for their faults. They are also, by fits, under great apprehension of the danger of their condition, and that the course which they are in, if they continue in it, will prove fatal to them, and ruine them at last: Especially, when their consciences are throughly awakened, by some great affliction, or the near approach of death and a lively sense of another World. And the apprehension of a mighty danger will make men to look about them, and to use the best means to avoid it.

2. Very bad men when they have any thoughts of becoming better are apt to conceive some good hopes of God's grace and mercy. For though they find all the causes and reasons of despair in themselves, yet the consideration of the boundless goodness and compassions of God (how undeserved soever on their part) is apt to kindle some sparks of hope, even in the most desponding mind. His wonderful patience, in the midst of our manifold provocations, cannot but be a good sign to us, that he hath no mind that we should perish, but rather that we should come to repentance; and if we do repent, we are assured by his promise, that we shall be forgiven. *He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

3. Who knows what men throughly rouzed and startled may resolve, and do? And a mighty resolution will break through difficulties which seem insuperable. Though we be weak and pitiful Creatures; yet nature

when it is mightily irritated and stirr'd will do strange things. The resolutions of men upon the brink of dispair, have been of an incredible force: and the Soul of man in nothing more discovers its divine power and original, than in that spring which is in it whereby it recovers it self when it is mightily urged and prest. There is a sort of resolution which is in a manner invincible, and hardly any difficulty can resist it or stand before it.

Of this there have been great instances in several kinds. Some by an obstinate resolution, and taking incredible pains with themselves, have mastered great natural vices and defects. A *Socrates* and *Demosthenes*, who almost exceeded all mankind in those two things for which by nature they seemed to be least made, and most unfit. One, in governing of his passions, and the other in the mighty force and power of his eloquence.

Some, that by intemperance have brought themselves to a Dropsie, which hath just set them upon the brink of the grave, by a bold and steady purpose to abstain wholly from drink for a long time together, have rescued themselves from the jaws of death.

Some that had almost ruined themselves by a careless and dissolute life, and having run themselves out of their estates into debt, and being cast into prison, have there taken up a manly resolution to retrieve and recover themselves; and by the indefatigable labour and study of some years, in that uncomfortable retreat, have mastered the knowledge and skill of one of the most difficult Professions, in which they have afterwards proved great and eminent.

And some, in the full career of a wicked course, have by a sudden thought and resolution, raised in them and assisted by a mighty grace of God, taken up presently and made an immediate change from great wickedness and impiety of life to a very exemplary degree of goodness and vertue.

The two great encouragements to vertue which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars were these; and they were worthy of so great a Philosopher; *First, Chuse always the best course of life, and custom will soon make it the most pleasant.* The *other* was this, that *Power and Necessity are Neighbours* and *never dwell far from one another.* When men are prest by a great necessity, when nature is spurr'd up and urged to the utmost, men discover in themselves a power which they thought they had not, and find at last that they can do that which at first they despaired of ever being able to do.

4. The grace and assistance of God when sincerely sought, is never to be despaired of. So that if we do but heartily and in good earnest resolve upon a better course and implore the help of God's grace to this purpose, no degree of it that is necessary shall be wanting to us. And here is our chief ground of hope. For we are *weak and unstable as water*; and when we have taken up good resolutions do easily start from them. So that fresh supplies, and a continued assistance of God's grace is necessary to keep up the first warmth and vigour of our resolutions, till they prove effectual and victorious. And this grace God hath promised he will not deny to us, when we are thus disposed for it; that he *he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it*; that *he will not quench the smoaking flax, nor break the bruised reed, until he bring forth judgment unto victory.*

All that now remains is to apply this to our selves: And we are all concerned in it: For we shall all find our selves comprehended under one of these three Heads: Either we are of the number of those few happy Persons, who by the influence and advantage of a good education were never engaged

gaged in a bad courſe: 'Or, of thoſe who have been drawn into vice, but are not yet far gone in it: Or, of thoſe who have been long accuſtomed to an evil courſe, and are grown old and ſtiff in it.

The firſt of theſe have great cauſe to thank God for this ſingular felicity, that they were never enſnared and intangled in vicious habits, that they have not had the trial of their own weakneſs under this miſerable ſlavery, that they never knew what it was to be out of their own power, to have loſt their liberty and the Government of themſelves. When we hear of the miſerable ſervitude of the poor Chriſtians in *Turkey*, we are apt, as there is great reaſon, to pity them, and to think what a bleſſing of God it is to us that we are not in their condition: And yet *that* ſlavery is not comparable to *this*, either for the ſad nature, or the diſmal *conſequences* of it; or for the difficulty of being releaſed from it. And let ſuch perſons, who have been thus happy never to have been engaged in an evil courſe, preſerve their innocency with great tenderneſs and care, as the greateſt Jewel in the world. No Man knows what he does, and what a foundation of trouble he lays to himſelf, when he forfeits his innocency, and breaks the peace of his own mind; when he yields to a Temptation, and makes the firſt ſtep into a bad courſe. He little thinks whither his luſts may hurry him, and what a monſter they may make of him before they have done with him.

2. Thoſe who have been ſeduced, but are not yet deeply engaged in an evil courſe, let them make a ſpeedy retreat, leſt they put it for ever out of their power to return. Perhaps their feet only are yet enſnared, but their hands are at liberty, and they have ſome power left, whereby with an ordinary grace of God they may looſe and reſcue themſelves. But after a while their hands may be manacled, and all their power may be gone; and when they are thus *bound hand and foot*, they are juſt prepared, and in danger every moment, *to be caſt into utter darkneſs*.

3. As for thoſe, who are gone very far and are grown old in vice, who can forbear to lament over them? for they are a ſad ſpectacle indeed, and the trueſt object of pity in the World. And yet, *their* recovery is not utterly to be deſpaired of; for *with God it is poſſible*. The Spirit of God, which hath withdrawn himſelf, or rather hath been driven away by them, may yet be perſuaded to return and to undertake them once more, if they would but ſeriouſly reſolve upon a change, and heartily beg God's aſſiſtance to that purpoſe. If we would take up a mighty reſolution, we might hope that God would afford a miraculous grace to ſecond it, and make it effectual to our recovery. Even in this perverſe and degenerate Age in which we live, God hath not been wanting to give ſome miraculous inſtances of his grace and mercy to ſinners, and thoſe perhaps equal to any of thoſe we meet with in Scripture, of *Manaſſes*, or *Mary Magdalen*, or the *penitent Thief*; both for the greatneſs of the offenders, and the miracle of their change: To the end that none might deſpair, and for want of the encouragement of an example equal to their own caſe, be diſheartened from ſo noble an enterpriſe. I am loth to put you in mind how bad ſome have been, who yet have been *ſnatched as Firebrands out of the Fire*; and that in ſo ſtrange a manner, that it would even amaze a Man to think of the wonder of their recovery: thoſe who have ſunk themſelves into the very depth of infidelity and wickedneſs, have by a mighty hand and out-ſtretched arm of God been pluckt out of this horrible Pit. And will we ſtill ſtand it out with God, when ſuch great Leaders have given up the cauſe, and have ſurrendred and yielded up themſelves willing Captives to the Grace of God? that omni-

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potent grace of God, which can easily subdue the stoutest heart of Man, by letting in so strong a light upon our minds, and pouring such terrible convictions into our consciences, that we can find no ease but in turning to God.

I hope there are none here so bad, as to need all the encouragement to repentance which such examples might give them: encouragement I say to repentance: for surely these examples can encourage no Man to venture any farther in a wicked course: they are so very rare, and like the instances of those who have been brought back to life after the sentence of death seemed to have been fully executed upon them.

But perhaps some will not believe that there have been such examples; or if they have, they impute all this either to a disturbed imagination, or to the faint and low spirits of Men under great bodily weakness, or to their natural cowardize and fear; or to I know not what foolish and fantastical design of compleating and finishing a wicked life with an hypocritical death. Nothing surely is easier than to put some bad construction upon the best things, and so slurr even repentance it self, and almost dash it out of countenance by some bold, and perhaps witty saying about it. But oh that Men were wise; oh that Men were wise! that they understood, and would consider their latter end! Come, let us neither trifle, nor dissemble in this matter; I dare say every man's Conscience is convinced, that they who have led very ill lives have so much reason for repentance, that we may easily believe it to be real. However, of all things in the world, let us not make a mock of repentance; that which must be our last sanctuary and refuge, and which we must all come to before we die, or *it had been better for us we had never been born.* Therefore, *let my counsel be acceptable unto you, break off your sins by repentance,* and *your iniquities by righteousness:* And that instantly, and without delay; *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* If we have been enslaved but a little to a vicious course, we shall find it a task difficult enough to assert our own liberty, to *break these bonds in sunder and to cast these cords from us:* But if we have been long under this bondage, we have done so much to undo our selves, and to make our case desperate, that it is God's infinite mercy to us that there is yet hope. Therefore, *give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while you look for light, he turn it into darkness and the shadow of death.* I will conclude with that encouraging invitation, even to the greatest of sinners to repentance, from the mouth of God himself, *Isa.* 55. *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your Soul shall live: seek the Lord while he may be found; and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.*

To him let us apply our selves, and humbly beseech him, *who is mighty to save,* that he would stretch forth the right hand of his power for our deliverance, from this miserable and cruel bondage of our lusts: and that *as the rain cometh down from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud;* so he would grant that *his word may not return void, but accomplish his pleasure, and prosper in the thing to which he sent it;* For his mercy sake in Jesus Christ, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever.* Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXX.

The Neceſſity of the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures

Matthew xxiii. 13.

Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men; and ye neither go in your ſelves, neither ſuffer ye them that are entring to go in.



THE *Scribes* ſo often mentioned in the *Goſpel*, were the great Doctors among the *Jews*, the Teachers and Interpreters of the Law of God. And becauſe many of them were of the Sect of the *Phariſees*, which above all others pretended to skill and knowledge in the Law, therefore it is that our bleſſed *Saviour* does ſo often put the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* together. And theſe were the men of chief Authority in the *Jewiſh* Church; who equalled their own unwritten word and traditions with the Law of God: Nay, our *Saviour* tells us, *they made all the Commandments of God of none effect by their Traditions*. They did in effect aſſume to themſelves *infallibility*; and all that oppoſed and contradicted them they branded with the odious name of *Hereticks*. Againſt theſe our *Saviour* denounceth this Wo here in the *Text*, *Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*, &c.

All the difficulty in the words is what is here meant by *ſhutting up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*: St. *Luke* expreſſeth it more plainly, *Ye have taken away the key of knowledge, ye entred not in your ſelves, and them that were entring in, ye hindered.* By putting theſe two expreſſions together we ſhall the more eaſily come at the meaning of the *Text*, *Ye have taken away the key of knowledge*; and *have ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men.* This Metaphor of the *key of knowledge*, is undoubtedly an alluſion to that known cuſtom among the *Jews* in the admiſſion of their Doctors. For to whomſoever they gave Authority to interpret the Law and the Prophets, they were ſolemnly admitted into that office by delivering to them a *Key* and a *Table-Book*. So that by the *key of knowledge*, is here meant the interpretation and underſtanding of the Scriptures; and by *taking away the key of knowledge*, not only that they arrogated to themſelves alone the underſtanding of the Scriptures, but likewiſe that they had conveyed away this key of knowledge, and as it were hid it out of the way, neither uſing it themſelves as they ought, nor ſuffering others to make uſe of it.

And thus they *ſhut the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*; which is very fitly ſaid of thoſe who have locked the door againſt them that were going in, and have taken away the key. By all which it appears that the plain meaning of our *Saviour* in theſe Metaphorical expreſſions is, that the *Scribes* and Teachers of the Law, under a pretence of interpreting the Scriptures, had

perverted them and kept the true knowledge of them from the People: Especially those Prophecies of the *Old Testament* which concerned the *Messias*. And by this means the Kingdom of Heaven was shut against men: And they not only rejected the truth themselves, but by keeping men in ignorance of the true meaning of the Scriptures, they hindered many from embracing our *Saviour*'s Doctrine, and entring into the Kingdom of Heaven, who were otherwise well enough disposed for it.

Having thus explained the words, I shall from the main scope and design of them observe to you these two things.

1. The Necessity of the knowledge of the holy Scriptures in order to our eternal Salvation. It is called by our Saviour *the key of knowledge*, that which lets men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. The great and inexcusable fault of those who deprive the People of the knowledge of the holy Scriptures. They *shut the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*, and do what in them lies to hinder their eternal Salvation; and therefore our *Saviour* denounceth so heavy a Wo against them.

I shall speak briefly to these two *Observations*; and then apply them to those who are principally concerned in them.

I. *First*, I observe hence the Necessity of the knowledge of the holy Scriptures in order to our eternal Salvation. This is by our *Saviour* called *the key of knowledge*, that which lets men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Knowledge is necessary to Religion: It is necessary to the Being of it; and necessary to the life and practice of it. *Without Faith* (says the *Apostle*) *it is impossible to please God*: Because Faith is an act of the understanding, and does necessarily suppose some knowledge and apprehension of what we believe. To all acts of Religion there is necessarily required some act of the Understanding; so that without knowledge there can be no devotion in the service of God, no obedience to his Laws. Religion begins in the Understanding, and from thence descends upon the heart and life. *If ye know these things* (says our *Saviour*) *happy are ye if ye do them.* We must first know God, before we can worship him; and understand what is his will, before we can do it.

This is so very evident, that one would think there needed no discourse about it. And yet there are some in the World that cry up Ignorance as the Mother of Devotion. And to shew that we do not wrong them in this matter, Mr. *Rushworth* in his *Dialogues* (a *Book* in great vogue among the *Papists* here in *England*) does expresly reckon up *Ignorance* among *the Parents of Religion.* And can any thing be said more absurdly and more to the disparagement of Religion, than to derive the pedigree of the most excellent thing in the World from so obscure and ignoble an Original; and to make that which the Scripture calls *the beginning of wisdom*, and *the excellency of knowledge*, to be the Off-spring of Ignorance and a Child of darkness? Ignorance indeed may be the cause of wonder and admiration, and the mother of folly and superstition: But surely Religion is of a nobler Extraction, and is the issue and result of the best wisdom and knowledge; and descends from above, from the giver of every good and perfect gift, even the father of lights.

And as knowledge in general is necessary to Religion, so more particularly the knowledge of the *Holy Scriptures* is necessary to our eternal Salvation. Because these are the great and standing Revelation of God to mankind; wherein the Nature of God, and his Will concerning our duty and the terms and conditions of our eternal happiness in another World are fully and plainly declared to us. The

The Scriptures are the Word of God; and from whence can we learn the Will of God so well as from his own mouth? They are the great instrument of our Salvation; and should not every man be acquainted with that which alone can perfectly instruct him what he must believe, and what he must do that he may be saved? This is the testimony which the Scripture gives of it self, that it is *able to make men wise unto salvation*: And is it not very fit that every man should have this wisdom, and in order thereunto the free use of that *Book* from whence this wisdom is to be learned?

II. *Secondly*, I observe the great and inexcusable fault of those who keep men in Ignorance of Religion, and take away from them so excellent and necessary a means of divine knowledge as the *Holy Scriptures* are. This our *Saviour* calls *taking away the key of knowledge, and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven against Men.* That is, doing what in them lies to render it impossible for men to be saved. For this he denounceth a terrible *Wo* against the Teachers of the *Jewish* Church: Though they did not proceed so far as to deprive men of the use of the *Holy Scriptures*, but only of the right knowledge and understanding of them. This alone is a horrible impiety, to lead men into a false sense and interpretation of Scripture, but much greater to forbid them the reading of it. This is to stop knowledge at the very Fountain-head; and not only to lead men into Errour, but to take away from them all possibility of rectifying their mistakes. And can there be a greater sacrilege, than to rob men of the Word of God, the best means in the World of acquainting them with the Will of God and their duty, and the way to eternal happiness? To keep the people in Ignorance of that which is necessary to save them, is *to judge them unworthy of eternal life*, and to declare it does not belong to them, and maliciously to contrive the eternal ruine and destruction of their Souls. II.

To lock up the *Scriptures* and the *service of God* from the people in an unknown tongue, what is this but in effect to forbid men to know God and to serve him; to render them incapable of knowing what *is the good and acceptable will of God*; of joyning in his worship, or performing any part of it, or receiving any benefit or edification from it? And what is, if this be not, to shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men? This is so outragious a cruelty to the souls of men, that it is not to be excused upon any pretence whatsoever: This is to take the surest and most effectual way in the world *to destroy those for whom Christ died*, and directly to thwart the great design of God *our Saviour, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* Men may miscarry with their knowledge, but they are sure to perish for want of it.

The best things in the World have their inconveniencies attending them, and are liable to be abused; but surely men are not to be ruined and damned for fear of abusing their knowledge, or for the prevention of any other inconvenience whatsoever. Besides, this is to cross the very end of the Scriptures, and the design of God in inspiring men to write them. Can any man think that God should send this great light of his Word into the world, for the Priests to *hide it under a Bushel*; and not rather that it should be set up to the greatest advantage for the enlightening of the world? St. *Paul* tells us, *Rom.* 15. 4. That *whatsoever things were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* And 2 *Tim.* 3 16. *That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* And if the Scriptures were written for these ends, can any man have the

face

face to pretend that they do not concern the people as well as their teachers? Nay St. *Paul* expresly tells the Church of *Rome*, that they were written for their learning, however it happens that they are not now permitted to make use of them. Are the *Scriptures* so useful and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness? and why may they not be used by the people for those ends for which they were given? 'Tis true indeed they are fit for the most knowing and learned, and sufficient to make *the man of God perfect, and throughly furnished to every good work* (as the *Apostle* there tells us.) But does this exclude their being profitable also to the people; who may reasonably be presumed to stand much more in need of all means and helps of instruction than their Teachers? And though there be many difficulties and obscurities in the Scriptures, enough to exercise the skill and wit of the learned, yet are they not therefore either useless or dangerous to the People. The ancient *Fathers* of the Church were of another mind. St. *Chrysostome* tells us that, " Whatever things are necessary are manifest in the " Scriptures. And St. *Austin*, that all things are plain in the Scripture, " which concern faith and a good life; and that those things which are ne" cessary to the Salvation of men, are not so hard to be come at, but " that as to those things which the Scripture plainly contains, it speaks " without disguise like a familiar friend to the heart of the learned and un" learned. And upon these and such like considerations, the *Fathers* did every-where in their *Orations* and *Homilies* charge and exhort the people to be conversant in the Holy Scriptures, to read them daily and diligently and attentively. And I challenge our *Adversaries* to shew me where any of the ancient *Fathers* do discourage the people from reading the Scriptures, much less forbid them so to do. So that they who do it now have no Cloak for their sin: And they who pretend so confidently to *Antiquity* in other cases, are by the evidence of truth forced to acknowledge that it is against them in this. Though they have ten thousand *Schoolmen* on their side, yet have they not one Father, not the least pretence of Scripture, or rag of Antiquity to cover their nakedness in this point.

With great reason then does our *Saviour* denounce so heavy a *Wo* against such teachers. Of old in the like case God by his *Prophet* severely threatens the Priests of the *Jewish Church*, for not instructing the people in the knowledge of God, *Hosea* 4. 6. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; thou shalt be no more a Priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy Children.* God, you see, lays the ruine of so many Souls at their doors, and will require their blood at their hands. So many as perish for want of knowledge, and eternally miscarry by being deprived of the necessary means of Salvation, their destruction shall be charged upon those who *have taken away the key of knowledge, and shut the kingdom of heaven against men.*

And it is just with God to punish such persons, not only as the occasion, but as the Authors of their ruine. For who can judge otherwise, but that they who deprive men of the necessary means to any end, do purposely design to hinder them of attaining that end? And whatever may be pretended in this case; to deprive men of the Holy Scriptures, and to keep them ignorant of the service of God, and yet while they do so, to make a shew of an earnest desire of their Salvation, is just such a mockery, as if one of you that is a master should tell his prentice how much you desire he should thrive in the world, and be a rich man, but all the while keeps him ignorant of his trade in order to his being rich; and with the strictest care imaginable conceals from him the best means of learning that whereby alone

he is likely to thrive and get an estate. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites.*

By what hath been discoursed upon this Argument, you will easily perceive where the Application is like to fall. For the *Wo* denounced by our Saviour here in the *Text* against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, falls every whit as heavy upon the *Pastors* and *Teachers* of the *Roman* Church. They have taken away the key of knowledge with a witness; not only depriving the people of the right understanding of the Scriptures, but of the very use of them: As if they were so afraid they should understand them, that they dare not suffer them so much as to be acquainted with them.

This Tyranny *that* Church hath exercised over those of her Communion for several hundreds of years. It grew upon them indeed by degrees: For as by the inundation of *Barbarous* Nations upon the *Roman* Empire the *Romans* lost their Language by degrees, so the Governours of that Church still kept up the Scriptures and the service of God in the *Latin tongue*; which at last was wholly unknown to the common people. And about the *ninth* and *tenth Centuries*, when by the general consent of all their own *Historians* gross darkness and ignorance covered this part of the world, the *Pope* and the *Priests* took away the *key of knowledge*, and did (as I may so say) put it under the door for several Ages; till the *Reformation* fetched it out again, and rubbed off the rust of it.

And I profess seriously that hardly any thing in the world, was ever to me more astonishing, than this uncharitable and cruel usage of the people in the Church of *Rome*. And I cannot tell which to wonder at most, the insolence of their Governours in imposing upon men this senseless way of serving God, or the patience shall I call it, or rather stupidity of the people in enduring to be so intolerably abused. Why should reasonable Creatures be treated at this rude and barbarous rate? As if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the Will of God; and as if that which every man ought to do, were not fit for every man to know: As if the common people had only Bodies to be present at the service of God, but no Souls; or as if they were all distracted and out of their wits, and it were a dangerous thing to let in the light upon them.

But to speak more distinctly. There are *two* things we charge them withal, and which they are not able to deny. Their performing the publick *service of God* in an unknown Tongue; and depriving the People of the use of the *Scriptures*. And I shall first tell you what we have to say against these things, and then consider what they pretend for them.

1. As for their performing the service of God in a tongue unknown to the People. And I begin with St. *Paul*, who in his first *Epistle* to the *Corinthians* hath a whole Chapter on purpose to shew the unreasonableness of this thing, and how contrary it is to the edification of *Christians*. His discourse is so plain and so well known, that I shall not particularly insist upon it. *Erasmus*, in his *Annotations* upon this *Chapter*, breaks out, (as well he might) into admiration at the practice of the Church of *Rome* in his time. *Hac in re mirum quam mutata sit Ecclesiæ consuetudo*: "It is wonderful (says he) how "the custom of the Church is altered in this matter. St. *Paul had rather speak* "*five words with understanding, and so as to teach others, than ten thousand in an* "*unknown tongue*. Why does the Church doubt to follow so great an Au-"thority, or rather how dares she to dissent from it?

As for the practice of the ancient Church let *Origen* bear witness. "The "*Grecians* (saith he) in their prayers use the *Greek*, and the *Romans* the "*Latin* tongue; and so every one according to his Language prayeth unto "God, and praiseth him as he is able.

And not only in *Origen*'s time, but for more than the first six hundred years, the service of God was always performed in a known Tongue. And this the learned men of their own Church do not deny. And Cardinal *Cajetan* (as *Cassander* tells us) said it was much better this Custom were restored; and being reproved for saying so, he said he learned it from St. *Paul*. And *Bellarmine* himself confesseth that the *Armenians*, *Egyptians*, *Ethiopians*, *Russians*, and others do use their own Language in their Liturgies at this day.

But it is otherwise now in the Church of *Rome*, and hath been for several Ages. And it seems they lay great stress upon it, not only as a thing of great Use, but Necessity. For Pope *Gregory* the VII. forbids the Prince of *Bohemia* to permit to the People the celebration of divine Offices in the *Sclavonian* Tongue; and commands him to oppose them herein with all his Forces. It seems he thought it a cause worthy the fighting for: and that it were much better the People should be killed, than suffered to understand their prayers.

But let us reason this matter a little calmly with them. Is it necessary for men to understand any thing they do in Religion? And is not prayer one of the most solemn parts of Religion? And why then should not men understand their Prayers as well as any thing else they do in Religion? Is it good that people should understand their private Prayers? (that we thank them) they allow: and why not publick as well? Is there less of Religion in publick Prayers? Is God less honoured by them? or are we not as capable of being edified and of having our hearts and affections moved and excited by them? Where then lies the difference? The more I consider it the more I am at a loss what tolerable reason any man can give why People should not understand their publick devotions as well as their private. If men cannot heartily and devoutly pray alone, without understanding what they ask of God, no more (say I) can they heartily and devoutly join in the publick Prayers which are made by the Priest without understanding what they are. If it be enough for the Priest to understand them, why should not the Priest only be present at them? unless the people do not meet to worship God, but only to wait upon the Priest. But by saying the Priest understands them, it seems it is better some body should understand them than not; and why is not that which is good for the Priest good for the People?

So that the true state of the *Controversie* is, whether it be fit that the people should be edified in the service of God; and whether it be fit the Church should order things contrary to edification? For it is plain that the service of God in an unknown tongue is useless and unprofitable to the People: Nay, it is evidently no publick service of God, when the Priest only understands it. For how can they be said to be *Publick Prayers* if the people do not joyn in them? And how can they joyn in that they do not understand? and to what purpose are *Lessons* of *Scripture* read, if People are to learn nothing by them? And how should they learn when they do not understand? This is as if one should pretend to teach a man *Greek*, by reading him Lectures every day out of an *Arabick* and *Persian* Book, of which he understands not one syllable.

II. As to their depriving the people of the use of the *Holy Scriptures*. Our blessed *Saviour* exhorts the *Jews* to *search the Scriptures*; and St. *Paul* chargeth the Christians that *the word of God should dwell richly in them*; And the ancient *Fathers* of the Church do most frequently and earnestly recommend to the People the reading and study of the Scriptures: How comes the case now to be so altered? Sure the word of God is not changed; that certainly abides and continues the same for ever.

I ſhall by and by examine what the Church of *Rome* pretends in excuſe of this Sacrilege. In the mean time I do not ſee what conſiderable Objections can be made againſt the People's reading of the Scriptures, which would not have held as well againſt the writing and publiſhing of them at firſt in a Language underſtood by the People: As the *Old Teſtament* was by the *Jews*, and the *Epiſtles* of the *Apoſtles* by the *Churches* to whom they were written, and the *Goſpels* both by *Jews* and *Greeks*. Were there no difficulties and obſcurities then in the *Scriptures*, capable of being wreſted by the unſtable and unlearned? Were not people then liable to errour, and was there no danger of Hereſie in thoſe Times? And yet theſe are their great Objections againſt putting the Scriptures into the hands of the People. Which is juſt like their arguing againſt giving the Cup to the Laity from the inconveniency of their *beards*, leſt ſome of the conſecrated Wine ſhould be ſpilt upon them: As if *errours* and *beards* were inconveniencies lately ſprung up in the world, and which mankind were not liable to in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity.

But if there were the ſame dangers and inconveniencies in all Ages, this Reaſon makes againſt the publiſhing of the Scriptures to the people at firſt, as much as againſt permitting them the uſe of them now. And in truth all theſe objections are againſt the Scripture it ſelf: And that which the Church of *Rome* would find fault with if they durſt, is that there ſhould be any ſuch *Book* in the world, and that it ſhould be in any bodies hands, learned or unlearned; for if it be dangerous to any, none are ſo capable of doing miſchief with it as men of wit and learning. So that at the bottom, if they would ſpeak out, the quarrel is againſt the Scriptures themſelves. This is too evident by the counſel given to Pope *Julius* the III. by the Biſhops met at *Bononia* to conſult about the eſtabliſhment of the *Roman* See: Where among other things they gave this as their laſt advice, and as the greateſt and weightieſt of all *That by all means as little of the Goſpel as might be, eſpecially in the Vulgar Tongue, ſhould be read to the people*; *and* that *little which was in the* Maſs *ought to be ſufficient*: *neither ſhould it be permitted to any mortal to read more. For ſo long* (ſay they) *as men were contented with that little, all things went well with them*; *but quite otherwiſe, ſince more was commonly read.* And ſpeaking of the Scripture, they give this remarkable teſtimony and commendation of it; *This in ſhort is that Book which, above all others, hath raiſed thoſe tempeſts and whirlwinds which we were almoſt carried away with. And in truth, if any one diligently conſiders it, and compares it with what is done in our Church, he will find them very contrary to each other, and our Doctrine not only to be very different from it, but repugnant to it.* If this be the caſe, they do like the reſt of the Children of this world prudently enough in their Generation: Can we blame 'em for being againſt the Scriptures, when the Scriptures are acknowledged to be ſo clearly againſt them? But ſurely no body that conſidereth theſe things would be of that Church, which is brought by the undeniable evidence of the things themſelves to this ſhameful confeſſion, *that* ſeveral of their Doctrines and Practices are very contrary to the Word of God.

Much more might have been ſaid againſt the practice of the Church of *Rome* in theſe two particulars, but this is ſufficient.

I ſhall in the *ſecond* place conſider, what is pretended for them. And indeed what can be pretended in juſtification of ſo contumelious an affront to mankind, ſo great a Tyranny and cruelty to the Souls of men? hath God forbidden the people to look into the Scriptures? No; quite contrary. Was it the practice of the ancient Church to lay this reſtraint upon men; or to celebrate the ſervice of God in an unknown Tongue? our adverſaries them-

 ſelves

selves have not the face to pretend this. I shall truly represent the substance of what they say in these *two* points.

I. As to the service of God in an unknown tongue they say these *four* things for themselves.

1. That the people do exercise a general devotion, and come with an intention to serve God; and that is accepted, though they do not particularly understand the prayers that are made, and the lessons that are read.

But is this all that is intended in the service of God? does not St. *Paul* expresly require more? *that* the understanding of the people should be edified by the particular service that is performed? And if what is done be not particularly understood, he tells us the People are not edified, nor can say *Amen* to the prayers and thanksgivings that are put up to God; and that any man that should come in and find people serving of God in this unprofitable and unreasonable manner would conclude that they were mad.

And if there be any general devotion in the people, it is because in general they understand what they are about; and why may they not as well understand the particular service that is performed, that so they might exercise a particular devotion? So that they are devout no farther than they understand; and consequently as to what they do not understand, had every whit as good be absent.

2. They say, the prayers are to God, and he understands them; and that is enough. But what harm were it, if all they that pray understood them also? Or indeed how can men pray to God without understanding what they ask of him? Is not prayer a part of the Christian worship? and is not that a reasonable service? and is any service reasonable that is not directed by our understandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections?

But then what say they to the *Lessons* and Exhortations of Scripture, which are likewise read to the People in an unknown tongue? Are these directed to God, or to the people only? And are they not designed by God for their instruction; and read either to that purpose or to none? And is it possible to instruct men by what they do not understand? This is a new and wonderful way of teaching, by concealing from the people the things which they should learn. Is it not all one, as to all purposes of edification, as if the Scriptures were not read, or any thing else in the place of them? as they many times do their Legends, which the wiser sort among them do not believe when they read them. For all things are alike to them that understand none; as all things are of a colour in the dark. Ignorance knows no difference of things; it is only knowledge that can distinguish.

3. They say that some do, at least in some measure, understand the particular prayers. If they do, that is no thanks to them. It is by accident if they are more knowing than the rest; and more than the Church either desires or intends. For if they desired it, they might order their service so, as every man might understand it.

4. They say that it is convenient that God should be served and worshipped in the same Language all the world over. Convenient for whom? For *God?* or for the *People?* Not for *God* surely. For he understands all other Languages as well as *Latin*, and for any thing we know to the contrary likes them as well. And certainly it cannot be so convenient for the *People*, because they generally understand no Language but their own; and it is very inconvenient they should not understand what they do in the Service of God. But perhaps they mean that it is convenient for the *Roman* Church to have it so; because this will look like an argument that they are the *Catholick*

tholick or universal Church, when the Language which was originally theirs shall be the universal Language in which all Nations shall serve God; and by this means also they may bring all Nations to be of their Religion, and yet make them never the wiser; and this is a very great convenience, because knowledge is a troublesome thing, and ignorance very quiet and peaceable, rendring men fit to be governed, and unfit to dispute.

II. As to their depriving the people of the Scriptures, the summ of what they say may be reduced to these *three* Heads.

1. That the Church can give leave to men to read the Scriptures. But this not without great trouble and difficulty: there must be a License for it under the hand of the Bishop or Inquisitor, by the Advice of the Priest or Confessor, concerning the fitness of the Person that desires this Privilege; And we may be sure they will think none fit, but those of whom they have the greatest confidence and security: And whoever presumes to do it otherwise, is to be denied absolution; which is, as much as in them lies, to damn men for presuming to read the Word of God without their leave.

And, whatever they may allow here in *England*, where they hold their people upon more slippery terms, yet this privilege is very rarely granted where they are in full possession of their power, and have the people perfectly under their Yoke.

2. They tell us they instruct the people otherwise. This indeed were something if they did it to purpose; but generally they do it very sparingly and slightly. Their Sermons are commonly made up of feigned stories and miracles of *Saints*, and exhortations to the worship of them, (and especially of the blessed *Virgin*) and of their Images and Relicks. And for the truth of this I appeal to the innumerable Volumes of their *Sermons* and *Postils* in print; which I suppose are none of their worst. I am sure *Erasmus* says that in his time in several Countries the People did scarce once in half a year hear a profitable Sermon to exhort them to true piety. Indeed they allow the people some *Catechisms* and *Manuals* of devotion; and yet in many of them they have the conscience and the confidence to *steal away the second Commandment* in the face of the *eighth*.

But, to bring the matter to a point, if those helps of instruction are agreeable to the Scriptures, why are they so afraid the people should read the Scriptures? if they are not, why do they deceive and delude them?

3. They say that people are apt to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, and that the promiscuous use of them hath been the great occasion of Heresies. It cannot be denied to be the condition of the very best things in the world, that they are liable to be abused: health and light and liberty, as well as knowledge. But must all these be therefore taken away? This very inconvenience of peoples wresting the Scriptures to their own ruin St. *Peter* takes notice of in his days; but he does not therefore forbid men the reading of them, as his more prudent Successours have done since. Suppose the reading of the Scriptures hath been the occasion of Heresies; were there ever more than in the first Ages of Christianity? and yet neither the Apostles nor their Successours ever prescribed this remedy. But are they in earnest? must not men know the truth for fear of falling into Errour? Because men may possibly miss their way at noon-day, must they never travel but in the night, when they are sure to lose it?

And when all is done, this is not true, that Heresies have sprung from this cause. They have generally been broached by the learned, from whom the Scriptures neither were, nor could be concealed. And for this I appeal to the History and Experience of all Ages. I am well assured the ancient

Fathers

Fathers were of another mind. St. *Chrysostom* says, *If men would be conversant in the Scriptures and attend to them, they would not only fall into errours themselves, but rescue those that are deceived*: And that *the Scriptures would instruct men both in right opinions and a good life.* And St. *Hierome* more expresly to our purpose. That *infinite evils arise from the Ignorance of the Scriptures*; and *that from that cause the most part of Heresies have come.*

But if what they say were true, is not this to lay the blame of all the ancient Heresies upon the ill management of things by our *Saviour*, and his *Apostles*, and the holy *Fathers* of the Church for so many Ages, and their imprudent dispensing of the Scriptures to the people? This indeed is to charge the matter home; and yet this consequence is unavoidable. For the Church of *Rome* cannot justifie the piety and prudence of their present practices, without accusing all these.

But the thing which they mainly rely upon as to both these practices is this. That though these things were otherwise in the *Apostles* times, and in the *Ancient Church*, yet the Church hath power to alter them according to the exigence and circumstances of time. I have purposely reserved this for the last place, because it is their last refuge; and if this fail them they are gone.

To shew the weakness of this pretence, we will, if they please, take it for granted, that the Governours of the Church have in no Age more power, than the Apostles had in theirs. Now St. *Paul* tells us, 2 *Cor.* 10. 8. that the Authority which the Apostles had given them from the Lord, was only *for edification but not for destruction*: And the same St. *Paul* makes it the business of a whole *Chapter* to shew that the performing the publick service of God, and particularly Praying in an unknown Tongue, are contrary to edification; from which premises the conclusion is plain, That the *Apostles* themselves had no Authority to appoint the service of God to be performed in an unknown Tongue; and surely it is Arrogance for the Church in any Age to pretend greater Authority than the Apostles had.

This is the summ of what our *Adversaries* say in justification of themselves in these points. And there is no doubt, but that men of wit and confidence will always make a shift to say something for any thing: and some way or other blanch over the blackest and most absurd things in the world. But I leave it to the judgment of mankind whether any thing be more unreasonable than to tell men in effect, that it is fit they should understand as little of Religion as is possible; that God hath published a very dangerous Book, with which it is not safe for the people to be familiarly acquainted; that our blessed *Saviour* and his *Apostles* and the ancient *Christian* Church for more than six hundred years were not wise managers of Religion, nor prudent dispensers of the Scriptures; but like fond and foolish Fathers put a knife and a sword into the hands of their Children, with which they might easily have foreseen what mischief they would do to themselves and others. And who would not chuse to be of such a Church which is provided of such excellent and effectual means of Ignorance, such wise and infallible methods for the prevention of knowledge in the people, and such variety of close shutters to keep out the light?

I have chosen to insist upon this Argument, because it is so very plain, that the most ordinary capacity may judge of this usage and dealing with the souls of men; which is so very gross that every man must needs be sensible of it; because it toucheth men in the common rights of human nature, which belong to them as much as the light of heaven, and the air we breathe in.

It requires no subtilty of wit, no skill in Antiquity, to understand these Controversies between us and the Church of *Rome*. For there are no *Fathers* to be pretended on both sides in these Questions: They yield we have Antiquity on ours: And we refer it to the common sense of Mankind, which Church, that of *Rome* or *Ours*, hath all the right and reason in the world on her side in these debates? And, who they are that tyrannize over Christians, the Governours of their Church or ours; who use the people like sons and freemen, and who like slaves; who feed the Flock of Christ committed to them, and who take the Childrens bread from them? Who they are that when their Children ask bread, for bread give them a stone, and for an egg a serpent; I mean the *Legends* of their *Saints* instead of the Holy *Scriptures*, which are able to make men wise unto salvation: And who they are that lie most justly under the suspicion of Errours and Corruptions, they who bring their Doctrine and Practices into the open light, and are willing to have them tryed by the true touchstone, the *Word of God*; or they who shun the light, and decline all manner of tryal and examination? and who are most likely to carry on a worldly design, they who drive a trade of such mighty gain and advantage under pretence of Religion, and make such markets of the ignorance and sins of the people; or we whom malice it self cannot charge with serving any worldly design by any allowed Doctrine or Practice of our Religion? for we make no money of the mistakes of the people, nor do we fill their heads with vain fears of new places of torment to make them willing to empty their purses in a vainer hope of being delivered out of them. We do not like them pretend a mighty bank and treasure of Merits in the Church, which they sell to the people for ready money, giving them bills of Exchange from the *Pope* to *Purgatory*; when they who grant them have no reason to believe they will avail them, or be accepted in the other World.

For our parts we have no fear that our people should understand Religion too well: We could wish, with *Moses, that all the Lord's people were Prophets*: We should be heartily glad the people would read the holy Scriptures more diligently, being sufficiently assured that it is their own fault if they learn any thing but what is good from thence: We have no Doctrines or Practices contrary to Scripture, and consequently no occasion to keep it close from the sight of the people, or to hide any of the Commandments of God from them: We leave these mean arts to those who stand in need of them.

In a word, there is nothing which God hath said to men, which we desire should be concealed from them: Nay, we are willing the people should examine what we teach, and bring all our Doctrines *to the Law and to the Testimony*; that if they be not according to *this Rule*, they may neither believe them nor us 'Tis only things false and adulterate which shun the light and fear the touchstone. We have that security of the truth of our Religion, and of the agreeableness of it to the word of God; that honest confidence of the goodness of our Cause, that we do not forbid the people to read the best Books our Adversaries can write against it.

And now let any impartial man judge whether this be not a better argument of a good Cause, to leave men at liberty to try the grounds of their Religion, than the courses which are taken in the Church of *Rome*, to awe men with an *Inquisition*; and, as much as is possible, to keep the common people in Ignorance, not only of what their late Adversaries, the *Protestants*, but their chief and ancient Adversary, the *Scriptures*, have to say against them.

A man had need of more than common security of the skill and integrity of those to whom he perfectly resigns his understanding; this is too great a Trust to be reposed in humane frailty, and too strong a temptation to others to impose upon us; to abuse our blindness, and to make their own ends of our voluntary Ignorance and easie credulity. This is such a folly as if a rich man should make his Physician his heir; which is to tempt him either to destroy him or to let him die, for his own Interest. So he that trusts the care of his Soul with other men, and at the same time by *irrevocable Deed* settles his understanding upon them, lays too great a temptation before them to seduce and damn him for their own ends.

And now to reflect a little upon our selves. What cause have we to bless God who are so happily rescued from that more than *Egyptian* darkness and bondage, wherein this Nation was detained for several Ages, who are delivered out of the hands of those cruel task-masters, who required brick without straw; that men should be religious without competent understanding, and work out their own salvation while they denied them the means of all others the most necessary to it; who are so uncharitable as to allow us no salvation out of their Church, and yet so unreasonable as to deny us the very best means of salvation when we are in it.

Our Forefathers thought it a mighty privilege to have the Word of God restored to them, and the publick prayers and service of God celebrated in a known Tongue. Let us use this inestimable privilege with great modesty and humility; not to the nourishing of pride and self-conceit, of division and faction; but as the *Apostle* exhorts, *Let the word of God dwell richly in you, in all wisdom; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

It concerns us mightily (with which admonition I shall conclude) both for the honour and support of our Religion, to be at better union among our selves, and not to divide about lesser things: and so to demean our selves, as to take from our Adversaries all those pretences whereby they would justify themselves, or at least extenuate the guilt of that heavy charge, which falls every whit as justly upon them as ever it did upon the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, of *taking away the key of knowledge, and shutting the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering those that are entring to go in.*

SERMON

SERMON XXXI.

The Parable of the ten Virgins.

Preached before her Royal Highness the Princess *Ann* of *Denmark* at *Tunbridge-Wells*, *September* the 2d. 1688.

Matthew xxv. 1, 2, &c.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish, &c.



MY Design at present is to explain this *Parable*, and to make such *Observations* upon it as seem most naturally and without squeezing the *Parable* to spring from it: And then to make some *Application* of it to our selves.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins: By the *Kingdom of Heaven* is meant the state and condition of things under the *Gospel*; By the *ten Virgins*, those who embraced the Profession of it, which is here represented by their *taking their Lamps and going forth to meet the Bridegroom:* in allusion to the ancient Custom of *Marriages*, in which the *Bridegroom* was wont to lead home his *Bride* in the Night by the Light of *Lamps* or *Torches*.

But this Profession was not in all equally firm and fruitful; and therefore those who preserv'd and continued stedfast in this Profession, notwithstanding all the temptations and allurements of the World, and all the fierce storms and assaults of Persecution to which this Profession was exposed; and being thus firmly rooted in it, did bring forth the fruits of the Spirit and abound in the Graces and Virtues of a good Life; These are the *wise Virgins*: But those who either deserted this Profession, or did not bring forth Fruits answerable to it, are the *foolish Virgins*.

And that this is the true difference between them will appear, if we consider how the *Parable* represents them, *verſ.* 3, 4. *They that were fooliſh took their Lamps, and took no Oyl with them: But the wiſe took Oyl in their Veſſels with their Lamps.* So that they both took their *Lamps*, and both lighted them, and therefore muſt both be ſuppos'd to have ſome *Oyl* in their *Lamps* at firſt, as appears from *verſe* 8. where *the fooliſh Virgins ſaid unto the wiſe, give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.* They had it ſeems ſome Oyl in their Lamps at firſt, which kept them lighted for a little while, but had taken no care for a future ſupply. And therefore the difference between the *wiſe* and *fooliſh* Virgins did not, as ſome have imagin'd, conſiſt in this, that the *wiſe* Virgins had Oyl, but the *fooliſh* had none; but in this, that the *fooliſh* had taken no care for a further ſupply, after the Oyl which was at firſt put into their Lamps was ſpent; as the *wiſe* had done, who beſides the Oyl that was in their Lamps carried likewiſe a *Reſerve* in ſome other *Veſſel*, for a continual ſupply of the *Lamp*, as there ſhould be occaſion; *the wiſe took Oyl in their Veſſels with their Lamps.*

Now the meaning of all this is, That they who are repreſented by the *wiſe Virgins* had not only embraced the Profeſſion of the *Chriſtian* Religion, as the *fooliſh Virgins* alſo had done, for they both had their Lamps lighted; but they likewiſe perſever'd in that Profeſſion, and brought forth fruits anſwerable to it. For by *Oyl* in their *Lamps* and the firſt lighting of them, which was common to them both, is meant that ſolemn Profeſſion of *Faith* and *Repentance* which all *Chriſtians* make in *Baptiſm*: By that farther *ſupply of Oyl*, which the *wiſe Virgins* only took care to provide, is ſignified our conſtancy and perſeverance in this Profeſſion, together with the fruits of the Spirit, and the improvement of the *Grace* received in *Baptiſm* by the practice and exerciſe of all the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good life whereby men are fitted and prepar'd for *Death* and *Judgment*, which are here repreſented to us by the *coming of the Bridegroom.*

This being plainly the main ſcope and intention of the *Parable*, I ſhall explain the reſt of it, as there ſhall be occaſion, under the ſeveral *Obſervations* which I ſhall raiſe from the ſeveral parts of it. And they ſhall be theſe.

Firſt, I obſerve the charitable *Decorùm* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this as well as in the reſt of his *Parables*; as if He would fain ſuppoſe and hope, that among thoſe who enjoy the *Goſpel* and make profeſſion of it, the number of them that are truly good is equal to thoſe that are bad. For our *B. Saviour* here repreſents the whole number of the *Profeſſours* of *Chriſtianity* by *ten Virgins*, the half whereof the *Parable* ſeems to ſuppoſe to be truly and really good, and to perſevere in goodneſs to the end, *ver.* 1, 2. *Then ſhall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh.*

Secondly, I obſerve how very common it is for men to neglect this great concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a due preparation for another World; and how willing men are to deceive themſelves herein, and to depend upon any thing elſe, how groundleſs and unreaſonable ſoever, rather than to take pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner repreſented to us in the deſcription of the *fooliſh Virgins*, who had provided no *ſupply* of *Oyl* in their *Veſſels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was coming would have furniſhed themſelves by *borrowing* or *buying* of others, *verſ.* 8, 9, 10.

Thirdly, I obſerve, That even the better ſort of Chriſtians are not careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themſelves for Death and Judgment:

Whilſt

Whilst the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept; even the *wise Virgins* as well as the *foolish*.

Fourthly, I observe further, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpose, in this great work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the last. Thus the *foolish Virgins* did, and what a sad confusion and hurry they were in we may see *ver.* 6, 7, 8, 9. *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the* Bridegroom *cometh*; *go ye out to meet Him. At midnight*; the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other: *Then all those* Virgins *arose, and trimmed their Lamps: and the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out*: *But the wise answered, not so*; *lest there be not enough for us and you*; *but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves.* And how ineffectual all that they could do at that time prov'd to be, we find, *vers.* 10, 12, 12; *And whilst they went to buy the* Bridegroom *came*, *and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other* Virgins, *saying, Lord, Lord, open to us: But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

Fifthly, I observe that there is no such thing as *Works* of *Super-erogation*, That no man can do more than needs, and is his duty to do, by way of preparation for another World. For when the *foolish Virgins* would have beg'd of the *wise* some *Oyl for their Lamps, the wise answered, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.* It was only the *foolish Virgins* that had entertain'd this foolish conceit, that there might be an *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Merit* in others sufficient to supply their want: But the *wise* knew not of any that they had to spare, but suppos'd all that they had little enough to qualifie them for the reward of eternal life; *Not so*, say they, μήποτε, *lest at any time*, lest when there should be need and occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should prove little enough for our selves.

Sixthly and *lastly*, I observe, That if we could suppose any persons to be so over-good, as to have more grace and goodness than needs to qualifie them for the reward of eternal life, yet there is no *assigning* and *transferring* of this *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Virtue* from one man to another. For we see, *vers.* 9, 10. that all the ways which they could think of, of *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl* of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one Sinner should be in a condition to merit for another.

All these *Observations* seem to have some fair and probable foundation in some part or other of this *Parable*; and most of them, I am sure, are agreeable to the main scope and intention of the whole. I shall speak to them severally, and as briefly as I can.

First, I observe the charitable *Decorum* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this, as well as in the rest of his *Parables*; as if he would fain suppose and hope, that among those who enjoy the *Gospel* and make *Profession* of it, the number of those who make a firm and sincere Profession of it, and persevere in goodness to the end, is equal to the number of those who do not make good their Profession, or who fall off from it.

I shall not be long upon this, because I lay the least stress upon it, of all the rest. I shall only take notice, that our *B. Saviour* in this *Parable* represents the whole number of the *Professors* of *Christianity* by *ten* Virgins, the half of which the *Parable* seems to suppose to have sincerely embraced the *Christian Profession*, and to have persever'd therein to the last; *The Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened unto* ten Virgins, *which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the* Bridegroom: *And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

And this *Decorum* our *B. Saviour* seems carefully to observe in his other *Parables*: As in the *Parable* of the *Prodigal, Luke* 15. where for *one* Son that left his Father, and took riotous courses, there was *another* that stayed always with him and continued constant to his duty. And in the *Parable* of the *ten Talents* which immediately follows that of the *ten Virgins*, *two* are supposed to improve the Talents committed to them, for *one* that made no improvement of his. He that had *five Talents* committed to him made them *five more*, and he that had *two* gained *other two*; and only he that had but *one Talent*, *hid it in the earth*, and made no improvement of it. And in the *Parable* which I am now upon, the number of the *Professors* of *Christianity*, who took care to fit and prepare themselves for the *coming of the Bridegroom*, is supposed equal to the number of those who did not.

And whether this be particularly intended in the *Parable* or not, it may however be thus far instructive to us; That we should be so far from lessening the number of *true Christians*, and from confining the *Church* of *Christ* within a narrow compass, so as to exclude out of its *Communion* the far greatest part of the *Professors* of *Christianity*; that on the contrary, we should enlarge the *Kingdom* of *Christ* as much as we can, and extend our charity to all *Churches* and *Christians*, of what *Denomination* soever, as far as regard to Truth and to the foundations of the *Christian* Religion will permit us to believe and hope well of them; and rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part than to be mistaken on the censorious and damning side.

And for this reason perhaps it is, that our *B. Saviour* thought fit to frame his *Parables* with so remarkable a *Byass* to the charitable side: Partly to instruct us, to extend our charity towards all *Christian* Churches, and *Professors* of the *Christian* Religion, and our good hopes concerning them, as far as with reason we can: And partly to reprove the uncharitableness of the *Jews*, who positively excluded all the rest of Mankind, besides themselves, from all hopes of Salvation. An odious temper, which to the infinite Scandal of the *Christian* Name and Profession, hath prevail'd upon some *Christians* to that notorious degree, as not only to shut out all the *Reform'd* Part of the *Western* Church, almost equal in number to themselves, from all hopes of Salvation under the notion of *Hereticks*; but likewise to un-church all the other Churches of the *Christian* World, which are of much greater extent and number than themselves, that do not own subjection to the *Bishop* of *Rome*: And this they do, by declaring it to be *of necessity to Salvation for every Creature to be subject to the Roman Bishop*. And this *Supremacy* of the *Bishop* of *Rome* over all *Christian* Churches *Bellarmin* calls *the Sum of the Christian Religion*. So that the *Roman* Communion is plainly founded in *Schism*, that is, in the most unchristian and uncharitable *Principle* that can be, namely, *that they are the only true Church of Christ, out of which none can be saved*: which was the very *Schism* of the *Donatists*. And in this they are so positive, that the learned men of that Church, in their Disputes and Writings, are much more inclinable to believe the Salvation of *Heathens* to be possible, than of any of those Christians whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks*. The *Faith* of the Church of *Rome* is certainly none of the best; but one of the greatest and most essential Vertues of the *Christian Religion*, I mean *Charity*, I doubt they have the least share of any *Christian* Church this day in the World.

Secondly,

Secondly, I observe, not from any particular *circumstance*, but from the main *Scope* and design of this *Parable*, How very apt a great part of *Christians* are to neglect this great concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a careful and due preparation for another World; and how willing they are to deceive themselves in this matter, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take the pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the description of the *foolish Virgins*, who had provided no *supply* of *Oyl* in their *Vessels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was *coming* would have furnish'd themselves by *borrowing* or *buying* of others, *vers.* 8, 9, 10. They contented themselves with having their *Lamps* lighted at their first setting out to meet the *Bridegroom*, that is, with their being admitted into the *Profession* of *Christianity* by *Baptism*, but either were not stedfast in this *Profession*, or were not careful to adorn it with the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good life. II.

And the true Reason why men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and are so hardly brought to those things wherein Religion mainly consists, I mean the fruits of the Spirit and the practice of real Goodness; I say, the true reason of this is, because they are extreamly desirous to reconcile, if it were possible, the hopes of eternal happiness in another World with a liberty to live as they list in this present World: They are loth to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their lusts, and governing their passions, and bridling their tongues, and practising all those duties which are comprehended in those *two great Commandments* of the *Love of God* and of our *Neighbour*: They would fain gain the favour of God, and make their calling and election sure, by some easier way than by *giving all diligence* to add to their *Faith* and *Knowledge* the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good life.

For the plain truth of the matter is, men had rather that Religion should be any thing than what indeed it is, *viz.* the thwarting and crossing of their vicious inclinations, the curing of their evil and corrupt affections, the due care and government of their unruly appetites and passions, the sincere endeavour and the constant practice of all holiness and virtue in their lives: And therefore they had much rather have something that might handsomly palliate and excuse their evil inclinations and practices, than to be obliged to retrench and renounce them; and rather than amend and reform their wicked lives, they would be contented to make an *honourable amends* and compensation to Almighty God in some other way.

This hath been the way and folly of Mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and design of Religion, and to thrust it by, by substituting something else in the place of it, which, as they think, may serve the turn as well, having the appearance of as much devotion and respect towards God, and really costing them more money and pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impose upon themselves, and to please themselves with a conceit of pleasing God full as well, or better, by some other way than that which he hath prescribed and appointed for them.

By this means, and upon this *false Principle*, Religion hath ever been apt to degenerate both among *Jews* and *Christians*, into external and little observances, and into a great zeal for lesser things with a total neglect of the greater and weightier matters of Religion; and, in a word, into infinite *Superstitions* of one kind or other, and an arrogant conceit of the extraordinary

traordinary righteousness and merit of these things: In which some have proceeded to that height, as if they could drive a strict bargain with God for eternal life and happiness; and have treated Him in so insolent a manner, by their Doctrine of the *Merit* of their *Devotions* and *good Works*, as if God were as much beholden to them for their service and obedience, as they are to Him for the reward of them; which they are not afraid to say they may challenge at God's hands as of right and justice belonging to them.

Nay, so far have they carried this *Doctrine* in the Church of *Rome*, as not only to pretend to merit eternal life for themselves, but likewise to do a great deal more for the benefit and advantage of others who have not righteousness and goodness enough of their own: Which was the silly conceit of the *foolish Virgins* here in the *Parable*, as I shall have occasion to shew more fully by and by.

And it is no great wonder that such easie ways of Religion and pleasing God are very grateful to the corrupt Nature of Man, and that men who are resolv'd to continue in an evil course are glad to be of a Church which will assure Salvation to men upon such terms: The great difficulty is, for men to believe that things which are so apparently absurd and unreasonable can be true; and to perswade themselves that they can impose upon God by such pretences of service and obedience, as no wise *Prince* or *Father* upon earth is to be deluded withal by his *Subjects* or *Children*. We ought to have worthier thoughts of God, and to consider that He is a *great King*, and will be obey'd and observ'd by his Creatures *in his own way*, and make them happy upon his own terms: and that obedience to what he commands is better and more acceptable to him than any other Sacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands: and likewise, that he is infinitely wise and good; and therefore that the *Laws*, which he hath given us to live by, are much more likely and certain means of our happiness, than any *inventions* and *devices* of our own.

Thirdly, I observe that even the better and more considerate sort of *Christians* are not so careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themselves for *Death* and *Judgment*; *whilst the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*. Even the *Disciples* of our *Saviour*, whilst he was yet personally present with them, and after a particular charge given them from his own mouth, *Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation*; yet did not keep that guard upon themselves as to *watch with him for one hour*. *In many things*, says St. *James*, *we offend all*; even the best of us: And who is there that doth not, some time or other, remit of his vigilancy and care, so as to give the Devil an advantage and to lye open to temptation, for want of a continual guard upon himself? But then the difference between the *wise* and *foolish Virgins* was this, that though they both *slept*, yet the *wise* did not let their *Lamps* go out; they neither quitted their *Profession*, nor did they extinguish it by a bad life: and though when the *Bridegroom* came suddenly upon them, they were not so actually prepar'd to meet him by a continual vigilancy, yet they were habitually prepar'd by the good disposition of their minds and the general course of a holy life: Their *Lamps* might *burn dim* for want of continual trimming, but they had *Oyl* in their *Vessels* to *supply* their *Lamps*, which the *foolish Virgins* had taken no care to provide. But surely the greatest wisdom of all is to maintain a continual watchfulness, that so we may not be surpriz'd by the *coming of the Bridegroom*, and be in a confusion when *Death* or *Judgment* shall overtake us. And *blessed are those Servants*, and *wise* indeed, whose *Lamps* always *burn bright*,

bright, and whom the *Bridegroom* when *he comes ſhall find watching*, and in a fit poſture and preparation to meet Him.

Fourthly, I obſerve likewiſe, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpoſe, in this great work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the laſt. And thus the *fooliſh Virgins* did, but what a ſad confuſion and hurry they were in at the ſudden coming of the *Bridegroom*, when they were not only *aſleep*, but when after they were awaken'd they found themſelves altogether unprovided of that which was neceſſary to trim their *Lamps*, and to put them in a poſture to meet the *Bridegroom:* When they wanted that which was neceſſary at that very inſtant, but could not be provided in an inſtant*:* I ſay, what a tumult and confuſion they were in, being thus ſurpriz'd, the *Parable* repreſents to us at large, *verſ*. 6, 7, 8, 9. *and at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom* cometh, *go ye out to meet him. Then all thoſe Virgins aroſe and trimmed their Lamps*, that is, they went about it as well as they could; and the *fooliſh ſaid unto the wiſe, give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.*

At midnight there was a cry made, that is, at the moſt diſmal and unſeaſonable time of all other; when they were faſt aſleep, and ſuddenly awaken'd in great terrour, when they could not on the ſudden recollect themſelves, and conſider what to do; when the ſummons was ſo very ſhort, that they had neither time to conſider what was fit to be done, nor time to do it in.

And ſuch is the Caſe of thoſe who put off their *Repentance* and *Preparation* for another World, till they are ſurpriz'd by *Death* and *Judgment*; for it comes all to one in the iſſue, which of them it be. The *Parable* indeed ſeems more particularly to point at our *Lord's coming to Judgment*, but the caſe is much the ſame as to thoſe who are ſurpriz'd by *ſudden Death*; ſuch as gives them but little, or not ſufficient time for ſo great a work*:* becauſe ſuch as *Death* leaves them, *Judgment* will certainly find them.

And what a miſerable confuſion muſt they needs be in, who are thus ſurpriz'd either by the one or the other? How unfit ſhould we be, if the *general Judgment* of the World ſhould come upon us on the ſudden, to meet that *great Judge* at his *coming*, if we have made no preparation for it before that time? What ſhall we then be able to do, in that great and univerſal conſternation, when the *Son of man ſhall appear in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory*; when the *Sun ſhall be darken'd, and the Moon turned into blood, and all the powers of Heaven ſhall be ſhaken:* when *all Nature* ſhall feel ſuch violent pangs and convulſions, and the whole World ſhall be in a combuſtion flaming and cracking about our ears: When *the Heavens ſhall be ſhrivel'd up as a Scroll when it is roll'd together*, and the *Earth* ſhall be toſs'd from its Center, *and every Mountain and Iſland ſhall be removed*? What thoughts can the wiſeſt men then have about them, in the midſt of ſo much noiſe and terrour? Or if they could have any, what time will there then be to put them in execution? when they ſhall ſee the *Angel, that ſtandeth upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifting up his hand to Heaven, and ſwearing by Him that liveth for ever and ever that Time ſhall be no longer*; as this dreadful Day is deſcribed, *Rev.* 10. 5, 6. and *chap.* 6. 15. where Sinners are repreſented at the *Appearance* of this *Great Judge*, not as flying to God in hopes of mercy, but as flying from Him in utter deſpair of finding mercy with him: *The Kings of the Earth, and the Great Men, and the Mighty Men, and the Rich Men, and the Great Captains hid themſelves in the Dens and in the Rocks of the Earth; and ſaid to the Mountains and Rocks,*

fall

fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the Great Day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? The biggest and the boldest Sinners that ever were upon Earth, shall then flee from the face of Him whom they have so often blasphemed and denied; and shall so far despair of finding mercy with Him in that Day, who would sue to Him for it no sooner, that they shall address themselves to the *Mountains* and *Rocks*, as being more pitiful and exorable than *He*; *to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*: *From the wrath of the Lamb*, to signifie to us that nothing is more terrible than *Meekness* and *Patience* when they are throughly provok'd and turn'd into *Fury*.

In such dreadful confusion shall all impenitent Sinners be, when they shall be surpriz'd by that *Great and terrible Day of the Lord*: And the *Case* of a *dying Sinner*, who would take no care in the time of his Life and Health to make preparation for another World, is not much more hopeful and comfortable.

For alas! how little is it that a sick and dying man can do in such a strait of time? in the midst of so much pain and weakness of Body, and of such confusion and amazement of Mind. With what heart can he set about so great a Work, for which there is so little time? With what face can he apply himself to God in this extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his Life? And how can he have the confidence to hope, that God will hear his cries and regard his tears that are forc'd from him in this day of his necessity? when he is conscious to himself that in that *long day* of God's *Grace* and *Patience* he turned a deaf ear to all his merciful invitations, and *rejected the counsel of God against himself*. In a word, how can he who *would not know, in that his Day, the things which belonged to his peace*, expect any other but that they should now be for ever *hid from his eyes*, which are ready to be clos'd in utter darkness?

I will not pronounce any thing concerning the impossibility of a *Death-bed Repentance*: But I am sure that it is very difficult, and I believe very rare. We have but one *Example*, that I know of, in the whole *Bible* of the Repentance of a dying Sinner; I mean that of the *penitent Thief* upon the *Cross*: And the circumstances of his Case are so peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot see that it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to men in ordinary Cases. We are not like to suffer in the company of the *Son of God* and of the *Saviour of the World*; and if we could do so, it is not certain that we should behave our selves towards Him so well as the *penitent Thief* did, and make so very good an end of so very bad a Life.

And the *Parable* in the *Text* is so far from giving any encouragement to a *Death-bed Repentance* and *Preparation*, that it rather represents their Case as desparate who put off their *Preparation* to that Time. How ineffectual all that the *foolish Virgins* could do at that time did in the conclusion
v. 8, 9, 10, prove, is set forth to us at large in the *Parable*; They wanted *Oyl*, but
11, 12. could neither *borrow* nor *buy* it: They would *then* fain have had it, and ran about to get it; but it was not to be obtain'd neither by entreaty, nor for money: First they apply themselves to the *wise Virgins*, for a share in the
v. 8. *over-plus* of their *Graces* and *Virtues*; *the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out*; *but the wise answered not so*; *lest there be not enough for us and you*: The *wise Virgins*, it seems knew of none they had to spare: And then they are represented as *ironically* sending the *foolish Virgins* to some *famous Market* where this *Oyl* was pretended to be *sold*; *go*

ye

ye rather to them that sell and buy for your selves: And as dying and desperate V. 9.
persons are apt to catch at every twig, and when they can see no hopes of
being saved, are apt to believe every one that will give them any; so
these foolish Virgins follow the advice; *and whilst they went to buy, the* V. 10.
Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage,
and the door was shut; and afterwards came also the other Virgins, *saying,*
Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know
you not.

You see how *little*, or rather *no* encouragement at all there is from any the least circumstance in this *Parable*, for those who have delay'd their *Preparation* for another World till they be overtaken by *Death* or *Judgment*, to hope by any thing that they can then do, by any importunity which they can then use, to gain admission into Heaven. Let those consider this with fear and trembling, who forget God and neglect Religion all their Life-time, and yet feed themselves with vain hopes by some *Device* or other to be admitted into Heaven at last.

Fifthly, I observe that there is no such thing as *Works of Super-erogation*, V.
that is, that no man can do more than needs, and than is his duty to do, by
way of *Preparation* for another World. For when the *foolish* Virgins would V. 8.
have begg'd of the *wise* some *Oyl* for their *Lamps, the wise answered, not so; lest*
there be not enough for us and you: It was only the *foolish Virgins* that in the V. 9.
time of their extremity, and when they were conscious that they wanted that which was absolutely necessary to qualifie them for admission into Heaven, who had entertain'd this *idle Conceit* that there might be an *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Merit* in others sufficient to supply their want: But the *wise* knew not of any they had to spare, but supposed all that they had done, or could possibly do, to be little enough to qualifie them for the glorious Reward of eternal Life: *Not so*, say they, μήποτε *lest at any time*, that is, lest when there should be need and occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should be little enough for our selves: And in this *Point* they had been plainly instructed by the *Bridegroom* himself, *But ye, when ye have done all, say we are unprofitable servants, and have done nothing but what was our duty to do.*

And yet this *Conceit* of the *foolish Virgins*, as absurd as it is, hath been taken up in good earnest by a *grave Matron*, who gives out her self to be the *Mother and Mistress of all Churches*, and *the only infallible Oracle of Truth*, I mean the *Church* of *Rome*, whose avowed *Doctrine* it is, that there are some Persons so excellently good that they may do more than needs for their own Salvation: And therefore when they have done as much for themselves as in strict duty they are bound to do, and thereby have paid down a full and valuable consideration for Heaven, and as much as in equal justice between God and Man it is worth; that then they may go to work again for their *Friends*, and begin a new *Score*; and from that time forwards may put the *Surplusage* of their *good Works* as a *Debt* upon God, to be laid up in the *Publick Treasury* of the *Church*, as so many *Bills of Credit* which the *Pope* by his *Pardons* and *Indulgences* may dispense, and place to whose account he pleases: And out of this *Bank*, which is kept at *Rome*, those who never took care to have any Righteousness of their own may be supplied at reasonable rates.

To which they have added a further *supply* of *Grace*, if there should be any need of it, by the *Sacrament* of *extream Unction*, never heard of in the *Christian Church* for many Ages; but devised, as it were on pur-

pose, to furnish such *foolish Virgins* with *Oyl* as are here described in the *Parable*.

And thus by one *Device* or other they have enervated the *Christian Religion* to that degree, that it hath almost quite lost its true virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men: And, instead of the real fruits of *Goodness* and *Righteousness*, it produceth little else but *Superstition* and *Folly*; or if it produce any *real Virtues*, yet even the virtue of those *Virtues* is in a great measure spoil'd by their arrogant pretences of *Merit* and *Super-errogation*, and is render'd insignificant to themselves by their insolent carriage and behaviour towards God.

VI. *Sixthly* and *lastly*, If we could suppose any Persons to be so overgrown with Goodness, as to have more than needs to qualifie them for the Reward of eternal Life; yet there can be no *assigning* and *transferring* of this *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Virtue* from one man to another. For we see that all the ways that could be thought on of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl* of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one Sinner who owes all that he hath, and much more to God, should have any thing to spare wherewithal to *merit* for another.

Indeed our *B. Saviour* hath *merited* for us all the *Reward of eternal Life*, upon the *Conditions* of *Faith* and *Repentance* and *Obedience*: But the infinite *Merit* of his *Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be of no benefit and advantage to us, if we our selves be not really and inherently righteous. So St. *John* tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary *Conceit*, *Little Children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous*.

If we do sincerely endeavour to please God and to keep his Commandments in the general course of a holy and virtuous Life, the *Merit* of *Christ's perfect Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be available with God for the acceptance of our *sincere* though but *imperfect Obedience*. But if we take no care to be *righteous* and good our selves, the *perfect Righteousness* of *Christ* will do us no good; much less the *imperfect righteousness* of any other man who is a Sinner himself. And the holiest man that ever was upon Earth can no more *assign* and make over his *Righteousness*, or *Repentance*, or any part of either, to another that wants it, than a man can *bequeath* his *Wisdom*, or *Learning* to his *Heir*, or his *Friend*: No more than a *sick man* can be restored to *Health* by virtue of the *Physick* which another man hath taken.

Let no man therefore think of being good by a *Deputy*, that cannot be contented to be happy and to be saved the same way, that is, to go to *Hell* and to be tormented there in *Person*, and to go to *Heaven* and be admitted into that *Place of Bliss* only by *Proxy*. So that these *good Works* with a *hard name*, and the making over the *Merit* of them to others, have no manner of foundation either in *Scripture* or *Reason*, but are all meer *Fancy* and *Fiction* in *Divinity*.

The *Inference* from all this shall be the *application* which our *Saviour* makes of this *Parable*, *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour*
7. 13. *wherein the Son of man cometh*; as if he had said, the design of this *Parable* is to instruct us that we ought to be continually vigilant, and always upon our guard, and in a constant readiness and preparation *to meet the Bridegroom*; because we know not the time of his coming to *Judgment*, nor yet, which will be of the same consequence and concernment to us, do

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any of us know the precise time of our own *Death*. Either of these may happen at any time, and come when we least expect them. And therefore we should make the best and speediest provision that we can for another World, and should be continually upon our watch and trimming our Lamps, that we may not be surpriz'd by either of these; neither by our own *particular Death*, nor by the *general Judgment* of the World: *Because the Son of man will come in a Day when we look not for Him, and at an hour when we are not aware.*

More particularly, we should take up a present and effectual resolution not to delay our *Repentance* and the reformation of our Lives, that we may not have that great Work to do when we are not fit to do any thing; no not to dispose of our *temporal* Concernments, much less to prepare for *Eternity*, and to do that in a few moments which ought to have been the care and endeavour of our whole Lives: That we may not be forced to huddle up an imperfect, and I fear an insignificant *Repentance*; and to do that in great haste and confusion, which certainly does require our wisest and most deliberate thoughts, and all the consideration in the World.

And we should provide store of *Oyl* in our *Vessels*, wherewith to *supply* our *Lamps* that they may *burn bright* to the last; I mean, we should improve the *Grace* which we received in *Baptism*, by abounding in the fruits of the Spirit, and in all the substantial Virtues of a good Life; that so *an entrance may be ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

By this means, when we are called *to meet the Bridegroom*, we shall not be put to those miserable and sharking shifts which the *foolish Virgins* were driven to, of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl*; which will all fail us, when we come to depend upon them: And though the dying Man may make a hard shift to support himself with these false Comforts for a little while, yet when the short Delusion is over, which will be as soon as ever he is step'd into the other World, he will to his everlasting confusion and trouble find the door of Heaven shut against him, and that notwithstanding all his *vast Treasure* of *Pardons* and *Indulgences*, which have cost him so much, and are worth so little, he *shall never see the Kingdom of God.*

And *lastly*, we should take great care that we do not extinguish our *Lamps* by *quitting* the *Profession* of our *Holy Religion* upon any temptation of advantage, or for fear of any loss or suffering whatsoever. This *Occasion* will call for all our *Faith* and *Patience*, all our *Courage* and *Constancy*,

Nunc animis opus, Ænea, nunc pectore firmo.

When it comes to this *Trial*, we had need to *gird up the loins of our minds*, to summon all our forces, and to *put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand fast in an evil day, and when we have done all to stand.*

And now, *my Brethren*, to use the words of St. *Peter*, *I testifie unto you, that this is the true Grace of God wherein ye stand.* *The Protestant Reformed* 1 Pet.5.12
Religion, which we in this Nation profess, is the *very Gospel of Christ*, the *true ancient Christianity.*

And, for God's sake, since in this *hour of Temptation*, when our Religion is in so apparent hazard, we pretend to love it to that degree as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us resolve to practise it; and to testifie our love to it in the same way that our *Saviour* would have us shew our love to Him, by *keeping his Commandments.*

I will conclude all with the *Apostle's* Exhortation, so very proper for this
Phil. 1. 27. purpose, and to this present Time, *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ*, that is, chiefly and above all take care to lead lives suitable to the *Christian* Religion: And then, as it follows, *stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel: And in nothing terrified by your Adversaries, which to them is an evident token of perdition, but to you of Salvation, and that of God.*

Now unto him that is able to stablish you in the Gospel, and to keep you from falling; and to present you faultless before the presence of his Glory with exceeding joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both *now and ever.* Amen.
